

DIAMOND DICK

BOYS BEST

WEEKLY

JR. JR.

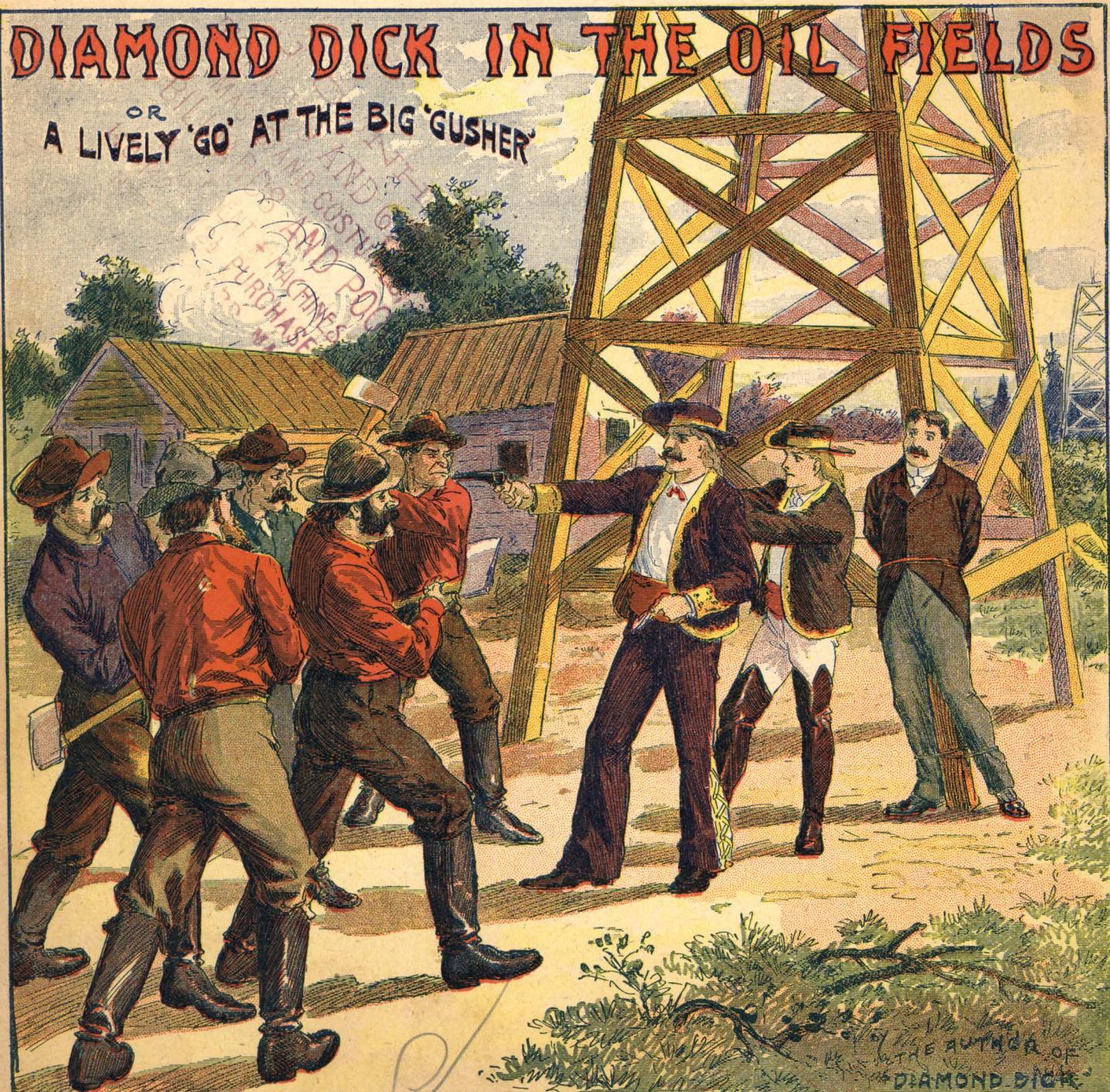
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No. 292.

Price, Five Cents.

DIAMOND DICK IN THE OIL FIELDS

OR
A LIVELY 'GO' AT THE BIG 'GUSHER'



"I'LL GIVE YOU RASCALS JUST TWO MINUTES TO GET OFF THIS PROPERTY!" SAID OLD DIAMOND DICK.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"DIAMOND DICK"

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NEW YORK, May 17, 1902.

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DIAMOND DICK IN THE OIL FIELDS;

OR,

A Lively "Go" at the Big "Gusher."

By the author of "DIAMOND DICK."

CHAPTER I.

AT THE BURNING SPRING.

"Ha! Is that you, Andy Meeker?"

"Ef it ain't, I don't reckon I know anythin' about myself. Handy Andy, or Andy of ole Cochise—that's me, with ground ter spare. An' you're Jim Hazen, owner of the Mesa Hill Oil Company, the feller I hired out to no longer ago than yesterday."

Two figures, coming out of the darkness from opposite ways, met within a hundred feet of the Burning Spring.

The Spring marked the southerly limits of the oil-producing territory in that part of the Texas oil belt, and was not so much of a curiosity as it might seem at first glance.

On the surface of a pool which measured half-a-dozen yards across the crude oil exuded; some pass-

ing traveler had ignited the oil and gas and now it burned brightly, a flaring landmark for all the country round.

Of the two men who had met by the Burning Spring, one was small, but lithe and muscularly built, in spite of his short stature.

He was roughly dressed, and carried himself with the slouching swagger of the bravado and the "bad man."

The other was well dressed, and while there was no air of bravado about him, there was a stealthy manner, hande had a shifty way of peering about him into the hovering shadows, on the alert against discovery as most unscrupulous men are prone to be.

The short man was Andy Meeker; the other was James Hazen, the wealthy proprietor of the Mesa Hill Oil Company.

"You're right," said Hazen, answering Meeker's remark as to his identity. "I've got a job I want done, and I think you're about the man to do it."

While voicing the last words, Hazen's tone sank to a whisper, and he drew close to Meeker's side.

The Burning Spring was a beacon which lighted up the surroundings fairly well, and Meeker was able to make note of the peculiar gaze with which Hazen regarded him.

"What fer kind of a job is it?" queried Meeker.

"That's the reason I sent word for you to meet me here, at the Burning Spring, at ten o'clock to-night," Hazen continued, ignoring the question which had been put to him.

"You sent me word an' I'm hyer," said Andy Meeker, sharply. "Now that I'm on deck, tell me what ye want an' git it over with."

Hazen gave another of his shifty looks into the surrounding darkness.

"What you say is to the point," said he. "For what I want done I am willing to pay \$5000 the moment I am convinced that the job is completed. How does the price strike you?"

"It may be too much an' it may not be enough," Andy Meeker growled. "It depends on what the work is; see?"

"Well, I'll tell you what the work is. You're not the only man I have asked to come to the Burning Spring to meet me to-night. The other man is to get here at twelve o'clock—two hours from now."

"Who is this other man?"

"Young Tilbury."

Andy Meeker gave a start—not perceptible to Hazen in the darkness.

"Evan Tilbury, eh?" muttered Meeker.

"You know him?"

"I've heard of him."

"Young Tilbury is a young fellow and not at all athletic. The job will be easy for you, Meeker. You're not very tall, but they say you can lick your weight in wildcats."

Meeker made no response, but waited for Hazen to get closer to the matter in hand.

"What I want you to do," said Hazen, in a hoarse whisper, after another glance around, "is to push Tilbury into the Burning Spring."

The words were spoken in a brisk, matter-of-fact tone—proof that Hazen's conscience was hardened against their murderous significance.

Still Andy Meeker made no response, but simply stood and looked at the man before him.

"You can do the work in good shape," Hazen proceeded. "A blow on the head from behind, to prevent outcry, a push into the Spring, and the fire and the water will do the rest. Tilbury will be found, but it will be argued that he fell into the Spring. It's a safe job, Meeker, and there's \$5000 in it. What do you say?"

"I say that ye've got all yer nerve with ye, Hazen, to come at me with any such proposition as that. Ye've sized me up wrong. I won't do the job fer no five thousand, ner five hundred thousand, ner five million!"

"Got mighty good, haven't you, since you slid out of New Orleans and left the name of Phil Luray behind you?"

There was a sneer in Hazen's voice, and Andy Meeker gave a startled jump.

"Thunder!" muttered Meeker. "What do you know about that?"

"I know too much for your good, my fine fellow. Money can't hire you to do this job, you say, but perhaps you'll do it to save your neck?"

"Ye've sized me up wrong again," jerked out Meeker, in a nervous way. "I don't know what ye're talkin' about."

"You'll do this job for me or you'll have a chance to recall those New Orleans matters behind the bars of the Oil City jail."

There was a hard, metallic ring to Hazen's voice—an undertone that meant business right from the drop of the hat.

Andy Meeker was silent again, this time for several seconds, for he was evidently turning the matter over in his mind.

"How did you find out about that New Orleans bizness?" he finally queried.

"There was a detective here from New Orleans, and he called to see me. He told me all about how Phil Luray had killed a man at a gambling table in New Orleans and had made off between two days, changing his name to Andy Meeker and allowing that he would hide himself somewhere in the oil country. If I ever heard of such a man I was to communicate with this detective—something which I stand ready to do in case you do not fall in with my plans."

"I reckon ye've got me on the mat, Hazen," said Meeker, with a guttural laugh. "I'll take the job at five thousand."

"Now we're getting together!" exclaimed Hazen, in a tone of satisfaction. "Stand by me and I'll stand by you, and your secret will be safe with me. There's my hand on it."

The oil magnate held out his hand, but Andy Meeker struck it aside.

"I'm no friend of your'n," said he; "if I do this job fer ye it's ter save my own neck an' fer nothin' else."

"Have it as you please," answered the other, coolly. "You're in my grip and I can squeeze out your miserable life, if I want to. I'll spare you if you do this work, and I'll give you the money, into the bargain. More than that, I'll throw other jobs your way—"

"No, ye don't, Hazen. No more o' yer dirty work fer me after this hyer job is done with. I'll use my five thousand ter take me out o' the country. When am I ter hev the money?"

"Just as soon as I'm convinced that Tilbury is out of the way."

"How am I ter convince ye? Will ye stay around hyer an' see the job done?"

"Never! You can take Tilbury's seal ring from his finger after—after the work is done, and bring it to me at the Four-Mile House on Burro Creek to-morrow morning at ten o'clock."

"What do you want of that ring?"

"It used to belong to Tilbury's father, and—Well, I want it, and that's enough."

"Tilbury's father used to be your pardner in this oil business, didn't he?"

"Yes."

"You've got some crooked scheme to work, and I'll bet on it. But I'll bring the ring to you an' you kin make ready ter fork over the five thousand."

Andy Meeker whirled on his heel and passed on toward the Spring, keeping his back to Hazen.

Hazen looked at him for a moment, gave a sneering laugh, and then passed out of sight with a quick and stealthy step.

Seating himself on a boulder near the Spring, Andy Meeker took a cigar from his pocket and smoked it slowly and thoughtfully.

Something less than two hours passed and then a crunching of the turf at Meeker's back informed him of the near approach of the man whom he had been hired to slay.

The steps came to a halt and a voice asked:

"Is that you, Mr. Hazen?"

"No," replied Meeker, getting up and turning around, "it's not Hazen; it's—somebody else."

The newcomer was a very young man and poorly clad.

He was little more than a boy—in fact, and he had a face that was honest and open and of almost a girlish cast.

"Your name is Tilbury?" went on Meeker.

"Yes, Evan Tilbury," answered the youth.

There was an expression of perplexity on his face, and his tone was one of bewilderment.

"Where are you staying in Oil City?"

"With Chrisler, a man who used to be in my father's employ."

"Well, when you go back to Chrisler's to-night, I don't want you to stir from the house, and not even to show your face at a window."

"What?"

Tilbury's amazement was on the increase.

"I was to meet Mr. Hazen here to-night—"

"Yes, and it was very foolish of you to come."

Hazen is your mortal enemy. If you care to preserve your life and win the fortune that is your right, you must do as I tell you. Remain at Chrisler's house until you receive word that it is safe for you to go out again. Let Chrisler spread the report that he doesn't know anything about you; also, give me that seal ring on your finger."

"I will do nothing until I understand more about this matter!"

"I am trying to befriend you."

"But who are you?"

"If I can convince you that I am all right, will you give me the ring and return without delay to Chrisler's place and remain there as I have said?"

"But what—?"

"No words about it, Tilbury. Yes or no."

"Yes."

Andy Meeker leaned forward and whispered a few words in the ear of Evan Tilbury.

The youth gave a surprised start.

"Diamond Dick, Jr.?" he cried.

"Not so loud! You've struck it, however, and much depends on yourself whether we win out in this game."

"Here!" and Tilbury pulled the ring from his finger and placed it in the other's hand. "Diamond Dick and his pards are my only friends, and if I can't trust them I might as well abandon hope. But can't you tell me more of what is going on?"

"Not a syllable."

"I am to go back to Chrisler's, lay low there, and let him spread the report that I have disappeared?"

"Yes."

"Very well; it shall be as you say."

Evan Tilbury faced about and made hurriedly off. Had he known more of that night's doings he would have thanked his lucky stars that Hazen had selected the supposed Andy Meeker, otherwise Phil Luray, for that deed of blood by the Burning Spring.

CHAPTER II.

ANDY MEEKER NO. 2.

It was hardly dawn when old Diamond Dick was awakened from a sound slumber by a bluff rap on the door of his room in the Oil City Hotel.

"Who's there?" he called.

"Bertie."

A moment more and the door was thrown open and the young sport, still disguised as Andy Meeker, entered the room, carefully closed the door behind him and dropped into a chair.

"How goes it, Bertie?" inquired the veteran, giving the young sport a curious glance.

"Better than I had any reason to expect."

"You don't mean to say that you have found out something of importance so soon as this?"

"I have discovered something that is of the utmost importance."

"You're a—a—what Harry sometimes calls you," laughed Diamond Dick, "fernomenon."

"My good luck happened because of your shrewd suggestion that I fix myself up as a tough and take the name of Andy Meeker."

"I thought that would help you out."

"When you told me to take that name, Diamond Dick, did you know that it was the alias of Phil Luray, a New Orleans murderer?"

"I did, and I knew that Hazen knew it. A detective from New Orleans called on me in regard to the matter, and said that he had also called on Hazen."

"And you thought that Hazen would learn of me, and that, if he had any crooked work to do, I would be the one he would pick out to do it?"

"That's precisely what I thought, Bertie."

"And that's precisely what happened," returned the young sport, his admiration of the old veteran showing in his face.

"You really think young Tilbury has got a case?" inquired Diamond Dick, wrapping a blanket around him and seating himself in a chair within confidential distance of the young sport.

"Supposing that Hazen should hire me to lay for

Ev Tilbury at the Burning Spring, knock him on the head and push him in? Wouldn't that look as though Tilbury had a case and was being made the victim of a plot?"

"Is that what happened?"

"Yes."

"And what did you do?"

The young sport told of what he had done, of the way he had been hired, of taking the seal ring, and of the instructions given to Tilbury; also of his appointment to meet Hazen at the Four-Mile House.

The old veteran listened with a thoughtful air.

"We're on the right track," said he, with satisfaction.

"And now that we are," said young Diamond Dick, "I would like to know more of Ev Tilbury's case."

"It will not take long to put you next to that. Tilbury's father, as I think you know, used to be a partner of Hazen's. Tilbury & Hazen, in point of fact, formed the company known as the Mesa Hill Oil Company and controlled half the wells and gushers in this vicinity."

"What became of the elder Tilbury?"

"He died suddenly of heart disease."

"Is that known to a certainty? If Hazen is the sort of man he is now showing himself to be, isn't it possible that Tilbury was—"

"No. Tilbury, senior, died a natural death. A doctor was with him, at the end, and I have talked with the doctor. Heart disease runs in the family, as Ev Tilbury himself says, and the doctor, I am confident, is a man to be trusted."

"Well, where does Ev Tilbury come in?"

"He comes to the scene a month after his father's demise; comes here from St. Louis to claim his father's interest in the property of the Mesa Oil Company and finds, upon his arrival, that instead of being a wealthy young man, as he had supposed, he is a pauper."

"How was that?"

"Hazen told him he had bought his father out, only the day before his death."

"Did Hazen show the deed conveying the elder Tilbury's interest in the property?"

"He did not, but said that he would as soon as he could get it from the place where it had been left for safe keeping."

"Is Ev Tilbury the only relative his father had?"

"The only one, and hence you see the reason why Hazen wants him put out of the way."

"But if Tilbury, senior, really sold out to Hazen there must have been a large amount of money changed hands?"

"Certainly, but Tilbury has only been able to locate less than \$100."

"How did Hazen explain that?"

"He didn't try to explain it, young Tilbury says. Of course, if Hazen could produce a writing from the elder Tilbury conveying the half interest in the oil company, Ev Tilbury's case would have been a hard one to fight; but now that you have discovered what you have, the whole game is plain."

"It's a swindle, from start to finish, and this man Hazen is a rogue and a killer, and will halt at nothing."

"My opinion of him exactly. I was down here, stopping at this hotel and looking around for an investment in oil lands, as you know, when Tilbury, learning I was in town, came to me, told me his fix and asked me to help him. He has offered me a half interest in anything I can get out of Hazen. Of course, I shall not take the half interest without giving the boy an equivalent, and the Mesa Hill property is one of the best-paying oil propositions in Texas. I saw what an opening this would be for us, Bertie, and that is why I sent for you and Harry and Two-Spot to come down here. We will help Tilbury recover his interest in the company and then we will sell our Outay railroad and purchase as much of his holdings as he desires to sell."

The railroad to which the old veteran had reference was the Tough-Nut and Pick-Me-Up line, in Arizona.

The Dicks had traded a gold mine for the property and had built up the line from a one horse, out-

law-ridden, poor-paying affair into one of the finest railroad propositions in the country.

Both the old veteran and the young sport had a sentimental feeling for the road, and the matter of disposing of it was distasteful to both of them.

But they had received many offers from a great trans-continental line, and the last offer was such a good one that the old veteran did not feel that they should turn it down.

"We're to give up the railroad business for the oil business, are we?" the young sport asked.

"I think it would be as well."

"What does Handsome Harry think about it?"

"He is favorably disposed. Since the Tough-Nut and Pick-Me-Up right of way has been cleared of trouble-breeders and plug-uglies the old Serpent's one worry has been the necessary drop in the excitement market, which is bound to follow. Any change, Harry thinks, will be for the better."

"Then I'm with you, Diamond Dick, and we'll bid good-bye to railroading and enter the oil fields."

"And a better chance to enter the oil fields will never be afforded us than right here and now. We have already got the whip-hand of this business of young Tilbury's, and cannot only help him out, but help ourselves at the same time."

"What is the next thing to be done?"

"You have a pull with Hazen which is too good to let slip. Take the ring and go to the Four-Mile House with it, just as Hazen planned. Find out what Hazen wants to do with the ring. He wants it for a purpose, there's no doubt."

"That is as I had already planned, Diamond Dick."

"You will have a dangerous mission, and I would go with you if I did not think it best to remain here and keep an eye on matters in town. As it is, Harry and Two-Spot will go with you."

"Not with me. That would give the snap away."

"They'll follow you and be at the Four-Mile House along about ten o'clock."

"I think I can take care of myself."

"So do I, but it is well to guard against surprises."

The young sport got up and stepped to the door.

"I've got to get away from this hang-out and take horse for Burro Creek. You will hear from me again, soon."

"Have you had breakfast?"

"Yes; crackers and cheese at a store down the street."

Bertie waved his hand to the old veteran and then let himself out of the room, and left the hotel by a rear entrance.

At a stable back of the hotel he made arrangements for a horse, but not without a good deal of talk.

The young sport had got himself up as a suspicious character and so well had he succeeded in this that the keeper of the livery barn was loath to hire him a mount.

When terms were finally agreed upon, Diamond Dick, Jr., had to put up nearly all that the horse and its accoutrements were worth. This sum was in the nature of a deposit to be forfeited in case the stableman's property was not returned.

With a good horse under him, and with two loaded revolvers concealed about his clothes, young Diamond Dick took the trail to the Four-Mile House with a light heart and in a confident frame of mind.

A success of which he had not even dreamed had attended him thus far in his perilous work.

The old veteran, after hearing Evan Tilbury's story and summoning the young sport from Ouray, had cast about in his mind for some means of satisfying himself as to whether young Tilbury's father had really sold out his share in the oil business before his death, as represented by Hazen, or whether Hazen was trying to work a snap game and freeze out Tilbury, junior.

The means which Diamond Dick finally decided upon was to have Bertie disguise himself as Andy Meeker and obtain employment at the big "gusher" belonging to the Mesa Oil Company.

The young sport's application for work had been made direct to Hazen himself, and thus the oil man

had been made cognizant of the fact that he had a supposedly shady character in his employment.

Of course, as the reader has discovered, Bertie was in the dark as to the personality of the man whose alias Diamond Dick had told him to take, and was not a little surprised at the quickness with which he had been hired by Hazen, and another surprise came in the shape of the note from his employer asking for an interview at the Burning Spring.

As Bertie galloped along the trail that led to Burro Creek he turned all these things over in his mind and came to the conclusion that Hazen was pretty close to the end of his rope.

A mile out of Oil City the young sport overhauled a hard-looking citizen toting a belt full of guns, mounted on a well put-up broncho and proceeding in his direction.

As one crook and ruffian instinctively knows and recognizes another, so this individual with the arsenal about his waist knew and, as he thought, recognized Bertie.

"Howdy," said the man.

"Howdy yerself," replied Diamond Dick, Jr.

"As ye seem ter be goin' my way, mebby ye'd like ter be sociable an' travel in comp'ny?"

"Shore thing," and the young sport drew down to a slower pace to accommodate the stranger's broncho which had seen hard work and was much jaded.

"How fur ye goin'?" inquired the stranger.

"Four-Mile House."

"Thet's right inter my own hand. What's the chances fer graft in these hyer parts?"

"Who you torkin' to?" Bertie retorted, bristling up.

"Now, don't go an' fly off'n the handle," said the other, with a surly grin. "I know blame well how you stack up. You've got the proper brand, an' I'm askin' ye a civil question. Is that a decent graft around hyer that a feller could lay hand to?"

"Afore I let out too much I'd like ter git next ter yer handle."

"Handle is it?" returned the stranger. "Wall, ye kin call me Andy Meeker."

Diamond Dick, Jr., came within an ace of tumbling out of his saddle, but caught himself up with a jerk.

"Where from?" he asked.

"New Orleans."

"What ye goin' out ter the Four-Mile House fer?" Bertie went on.

"Fer several reasons. Fust-off, it's shore a good place ter hang out while waitin' fer some graft ter show itself. Gig Jarvis runs the place, an' I useter know Gig back in Louisany. In the second place, I didn't know but I'd tackle ole Hazen fer a job, an' some o' his men at the big gusher told me he was goin' ter be out lookin' fer oil-land this mornin' an' might be rounded up at the Four-Mile House."

If this man, who was the real Andy Meeker, otherwise Phil Luray, ever went to Hazen, and gave his alias, the young sport knew there'd be trouble. It would be a case of too many Meekers, and something would have to drop.

"See hyer, podner," said Bertie, "I don't want ter advise ye much, but don't go near ole Hazen an' tell him ye're Andy Meeker."

"Why not?"

"Waal, he might ask ye if ye didn't know Phil Luray, an' ef ye hadn't had somethin' ter do with that little bizness in New Orleans—easy with that gun! Put it down! D'ye hear? I've got my hand in my coat pocket, and am kiverin' ye with a shooter."

Andy Meeker had shown signs of restlessness the instant Bertie had mentioned the name of Phil Luray; and when the young sport had spoken of that "little bizness in New Orleans" Meeker had let off an oath and jerked at a gun.

But young Diamond Dick's right hand was already in his jacket pocket, and the pocket showed suspicious bulk which went far to prove what he said about having a revolver there.

"I reckon I'm a heap too suspicious-like," said Meeker, with loud laugh, withdrawing his hand from his shooter. "Whar did ye git the idee that I was Phil Luray?"

"Thar was a detective in town, a spell ago, an' he

claimed that Phil Luray was some'rs in the oil country, sailin' under the name of Andy Meeker."

Another oath fell from the outlaw's lips.

"Thet's why," the young sport calmly proceeded, "I'm advisin' ye not ter go ter Hazen an' tell him yer name's Meeker."

"Who the devil are you?" ground out Meeker.

"Oh, I'm jest one o' the boys," Bertie answered, indefinitely.

"A sleuth, er somethin' like that?"

"Not on yer life."

"Waal, don't ye know too much. Thet's my advice ter you in exchange fer the advice ye've give ter me."

Bertie's confidence in the ultimate success of his work at the Four-Mile House was waning considerably.

Andy Meeker, the *real* outlaw who bore the alias, was an obstacle which must be put out of the way.

About the handiest way to remove him, according to Bertie's idea, was to place him under arrest and land him in the Oil City lock-up.

Rising in his stirrups but still keeping his right hand in his jacket pocket, Diamond Dick, Jr., cast a hurried glance backward along the trail.

Harry and Two-Spot were not yet in sight.

"Lookin' fer trouble back thar?" inquired Meeker.

"I'm allers expectin' trouble so's I won't be took off'n my guard when it strikes me," replied Bertie.

"Thet's sensible."

For a few moments the two horsemen rode on in silence, each furtively eying the other.

The young sport had made up his mind that he must capture Meeker single-handed, tie him up, gag him, and leave him in some secluded place while prosecuting his work at the Four-Mile House.

How to do this with Meeker in his present suspicious frame of mind was a conundrum.

Half a mile ahead was the timber which lined the banks of Burro Creek.

At that point the trail turned and followed down the creek until the Four-Mile House was reached.

Somewhere in that timber, as Bertie decided it,

Andy Meeker must be left—the exigencies of the case demanded it.

Quick and perilous work would be necessary, but Diamond Dick, Jr., was equal to that.

Just as they entered the timber the young sport would have given much could he have turned and looked behind him in a final attempt to locate Handsome Harry and Two-Spot Peters.

But, at the present juncture, such a move would not answer. The outlaw was too keenly alert for trouble. Had Bertie again deflected his attention to the rear, Meeker would probably have considered it ample cause and a good opportunity for opening hostilities.

Still covertly watching each other, they entered the timber and swerved to the right, the waters of Burro Creek flowing on the left of them.

Bertie was just nerving himself for rapid and dangerous work when Meeker gave vent to a whistle.

The answer to this signal was a sound of galloping from up and down the trail, both sounds converging toward the point where Meeker and Bertie found themselves at that identical moment.

In a twinkling, Bertie brought out the revolver which his right hand had been grasping in his jacket pocket and leveled the weapon at Meeker's breast.

The outlaw made no move to draw a gun, but sat passively in his saddle, his horse at a halt.

"What d'ye mean by givin' that signal?" demanded Bertie.

"I mean that yer goose is cooked, Mister Detective," answered Meeker. "I'm too old a buck ter let ye do me a turn, an' don't ye fergit it. Keerful how ye finger that trigger! My men air comin' from both ways an' drawin' a pair o' beads on ye. When you met up with me I shore thort ye'd make a good 'un fer the gang I'm organizin'—but I know ye now fer what ye air. Keep yer guns on him, boys. He's a sleuth, an', afore we're done with him we'll give him a swim in Burro Creek with his hands an' feet tied."

CHAPTER III.

THE FOUR-MILE HOUSE.

Bertie's usefulness, at that moment, seemed on the point of being somewhat impaired.

To right and left of him a couple of burly villains, whose shooters were in line with him to a hair, had drawn quick rein.

The odds were now three to one and little less than hopeless.

"This cove looks crooked enough, Andy," spoke up one of the new arrivals.

"He sartinly looks as though he had done time," averred the other.

"I'm all right," declared Bertie, "but I was givin' Andy a little advice an' he didn't like it."

"He knows so much," said Andy Meeker, "thet he's got ter be settled fer. His light's got ter be snuffed, an' purty *pronto*, at that."

"D'ye mean thet ye're reely goin' ter do fer me?" queried the young sport.

"Thet's what I mean."

It was a desperate pass for Diamond Dick, Jr.—a matter to be dealt with promptly, if at all.

Meeker, confident that the guns of his two followers would be sufficient to overawe the young sport, had not seen fit to draw his own weapons.

"When I left you fellers hyer, an' rode inter Oil City," Meeker went on, "I didn't opine I'd come ridin' back with a detective, but—"

Just then Diamond Dick, Jr., made a move which caused the outlaw to break off his remark with extreme suddenness.

Bertie did not shoot; on the contrary, he dropped his gun and threw himself upon Meeker, bearing him out of his saddle and into the road.

The outlaw struggled and swore, for the unexpected attack had caught him unawares.

"Shoot him!" shouted Meeker. "Give it to him! Consarn ye, what ye waitin' fer?"

But the two men dared not use their weapons for fear of shooting their leader.

Meeker and Bertie were twisted together and roll-

ing over and over in the trail, making the poorest kind of a target.

This was exactly what young Diamond Dick had counted upon when he executed his attack.

The other two outlaws flung themselves down from their horses and sprang to get at closer quarters with the young sport; but, before they could do anything, another diversion was caused.

"Gle-ory to snakes an' one-sided set-tos!" bawled a voice from up the trail. "A row on an' me not in it? A diffikilty paunin' out right under my eyes an' the ole Sarpint holdin' his hands an' loungin' around on the ragged aidge? Not ef I know myself!"

"It's three to one, Harry!" cried another voice, of shriller timber. "Crimp the duffers!"

Handsome Harry and Two-Spot! Bertie's heart leaped at the sound of their voices. They had happened along and right in the very nick.

"This way, old pard!" shouted Bertie. "Capture both of those men—I'll take care of this one."

"Why, durn my buttons ef it ain't the son of his dad! Whoop-ya! Wake up, snakes, an' sing ditties! Bunch yerselves, varmints, an' spill pizen!"

"Get next, get next!" cried Two-Spot.

And in less than a minute they were both of them "next" and in the best manner possible.

One of the outlaws pulled a trigger and fanned Handsome Harry's face with a slug from a forty-five and Harry returned the compliment by a sledge-hammer blow with his right.

Down went the outlaw, his wits wool gathering.

The second man drew a bead on the New York kid; but Two-Spot anticipated his shot with a bullet that wounded him in the foot and the man lurched forward so that the lead from his revolver plowed into the ground.

The wounded outlaw had more than enough, and he hurled his revolver from him, hopped to his horse, mounted and was away.

"Stop that man at all hazards!" cried Bertie.

"I'll put the kibosh on him!" answered the Bowery boy, turning to the horse and executing a flying leap for the saddle.

"Don't let the horses get away, Harry," Bertie went on; "I've got this fellow."

The Serpent of Siskiyou had four frightened horses to attend to, and he began gathering them in, keeping a watchful eye on the young sport and his antagonist the while to be ready to take a hand himself in case it was necessary.

But it was not necessary.

Diamond Dick, Jr., was of smaller build than Meeker, but he was more wiry, had more science and was fully as strong.

As soon as Harry and Two-Spot arrived, and Bertie had nothing to fear from the weapons of the other two outlaws, he began exerting himself to obtain the mastery.

One of Meeker's revolvers had slipped out of his belt, but the other he succeeded in drawing. He tried to use the weapon and might have done so with fatal effect had not young Diamond Dick snatched it from his hand at the critical moment.

Tearing himself loose, Bertie jumped erect and took aim at Meeker, who was getting up.

"Down with you!" commanded Bertie. "Down with you, Meeker—flat on your face, arms behind your back!"

"Who in the fiend's name are ye?" panted the outlaw.

"Diamond Dick, Jr.!"

"Thunderin' blazes! I might hev knowed——"

"Are you going to get down?"

"Sure!"

Instantly the outlaw stretched himself along the ground.

"I'll hold the horses while you tie him, Harry," said Bertie.

"Keno, pardy," answered the old Serpent.

Giving the bridle reins of the four horses into his little pard's hands, Handsome Harry removed a riata from one of the saddles and cut off a suitable length.

"One section of rope will do," observed the young sport. "Fasten his hands behind him and then we'll make him mount his horse. He and his man over there have got to be taken to the Oil City lock-up and you'll have to take them. We'll rope both of 'em to their horses."

In ten minutes Harry had both the men on horseback, hands fastened at their backs and feet secured by ropes which passed under the saddle cinches.

Their two horses also were made fast to the Californian's.

"What hev these ombrays got ter do with thet Oil City business, son?" queried Handsome Harry.

"Not much; but if I had allowed them any rope, the leader, thiere, would have given me a run for my auburn chip."

And Bertie explained who the leader was and what he had intended doing at the Four-Mile House.

It took the young sport some time to unbosom himself to the old Serpent, and, up to the time he had finished, the New York kid had not returned.

"What d'ye reckon has happened ter the kid?" queried Harry, in an auxious tone.

"Nothing," said Bertie, "and I don't think we need to worry over him. He's abundantly able to take care of himself. I told him to capture the wounded outlaw at all hazards, and he'll follow until he gets him. It's almost ten o'clock," the young sport added, casting a calculating look at the sun, "and I'm due at the Four-Mile House. I shall have to hit the trail and I would advise you, old pard, to waste no time in getting those two gun-fanners behind the bars. I'm going in the direction taken by Two-Spot and perhaps I may see him."

"Arter I land these varmints in the lock-up, what then?" Harry asked, swinging himself into the saddle.

"Diamond Dick will tell you what to do, after that."

"But Dick said ye'd need some 'un around, Bertie, when ye went ter thet Four-Mile House."

"I may, but you can do me more good by putting Meeker in the Oil City lock-up where he can't interfere with my plans."

"What ye say goes, son," and the old Serpent rode off with his two prisoners—Meeker marveling over the sudden change in his fortunes and the other man failing to marvel at all as his brain had not yet recovered from the jolt it had received from the Californian's fist.

As Bertie proceeded on his way, he congratulated himself on the good luck which had attended his efforts in getting Meeker out of his path.

All the way to the Four-Mile House he kept a sharp lookout for some sign of the wounded outlaw, or Two-Spot, but he saw nothing of either.

When he fled the wounded outlaw had taken the trail that led toward the Four-Mile House; in order

to effect his escape, however, he might have deemed it best to leave the road.

Although he disliked to carry out the rest of his plans until assured that the New York kid was safe, yet there was nothing else for the young sport to do if he was to meet Hazen as per the appointment made near the Burning Spring.

Fifteen minutes after leaving Handsome Harry, Diamond Dick, Jr., came within sight of the Four-Mile House.

It was a two-story structure constructed of boards which had been whip-sawed from trees cut along the creek.

As the boards had been nailed to the framework while green, they had shrunk in time and great cracks were left in the walls.

Gig Jarvis, the proprietor of the place, had married a Mexican woman, and this fact alone brought the thirsty Mexicans by the flock to the Four-Mile House.

Besides the Greaser patronage, there was much to be counted upon from cattlemen, from travelers, and from border ruffians who felt free to drop in on Gig Jarvis whenever they pleased.

Jarvis had none too good a record, but no particularly overt act had ever been laid at his door, and consequently the authorities could not bother him.

When Bertie rode up to the place and hitched his horse at one of the many posts in front of the door, everything was particularly quiet without and within.

No other horses were hitched in front, but around toward the barn there was a buckboard which might have been the vehicle which had brought Hazen—that is, if Hazen was on hand according to agreement.

Entering the front door, Diamond Dick, Jr., found himself in a small room which had a sanded floor and a bar running along one side.

A middle-aged and rather comely woman sat at a table engaged at needlework.

She was a Mexicana, as Bertie could tell at a glance.

"What do you want, senor?" she asked, flashing a look at him out of her hard, sloe-black eyes.

"I want to see a man named Hazen," replied Bertie. "Kin ye tell me ef he's around?"

The woman nodded, bestowed a sharply-curious

glance upon the young sport and then pointed to a rear door.

"Upstairs, senor," said she, returning to her work; "first door at the top."

When Bertie had the door between him and the woman he felt to see whether his weapons were handy and then made the ascent of the narrow stairs before him.

At the top of the flight there was a corridor and a door.

He knocked.

"Who is it?" came the voice of Hazen.

"Andy Meeker," replied Bertie.

"Come in, Meeker."

Young Diamond Dick passed into the room and found Hazen with his coat off seated at a table by the window.

Upon the table were pen, ink, a pad of paper, a stick of red sealing wax and a small kerosene lamp.

"What luck?" asked Hazen, stopping his writing to put the question.

"Fust class," said Bertie.

"You killed young Tilbury?"

"I put him out o' the way."

"And you got the ring?"

"Shore."

"Let me see it."

Young Diamond Dick took the ring from his pocket and crossed the room to hand it to Hazen.

"Good enough!" cried Hazen, in a voice of intense satisfaction. "That ring was all I needed. This is what I'm going to do with it."

Removing the chimney from the lamp, Hazen struck a match and lighted the wick.

He did not replace the chimney, but took up the stick of sealing wax, heated it in the flame and dropped a splotch upon the paper which lay before him on the table; then, moistening the surface of the ring with his tongue, he pressed the engraved gold down upon the wax.

"As good a seal as old Tilbury himself could have made," said Hazen, with a grim chuckle. "This quit-claim deed is a little late in materializing, but I have fixed the date, and copied Tilbury's hand in the signature so as to defy detection, and I'll gamble on it. Pick up that pen and sign here as a witness, Meeker."

"But lookey here once," cried Diamond Dick, Jr., "whar does my five thousand come in?"

"What?" cried Hazen; "beginning to worry about your money already, Meeker? Don't fret—you'll get it. Sign on that blank line as a witness."

Before the young sport signed he glanced the document over. He had but a brief period in which to scan the writing, but he made out that the paper was supposed to convey the Tilbury interest in the Mesa Hill Oil Company to Hazen.

Hazen watched the young sport's face, but it would have been better for the oil man if he had watched his hand and paid attention to what the hand wrote.

The young sport did not sign his assumed name of Meeker, but boldly wrote his real appellation—"Diamond Dick, Jr."

The writing finished, Hazen folded the document and slipped it into his pocket.

"Sit down over there, Meeker," said he, "and I'll give you the money in a few moments."

The partition at one side of the room was made of canvas, and when Hazen asked Diamond Dick, Jr., to take a seat, he pointed to a chair that stood close to the canvas wall.

Bertie walked over to the chair, dropped into it and waited while Hazen took out a long pocketbook and went through the motions of counting over some bills.

"Oh, bosh!" he exclaimed, finally, and folded up the pocketbook and replaced it in his pocket.

Getting up, he walked over to where the young sport was sitting.

"From the way you act, Andy Meeker," said Hazen, "any one would think that you first saw the light of day sometime yesterday. If you've got an idea that I'm fool enough to hand out five thousand for what you've done, you're away off your base. I'm done with you for good, my man—"

"Don't jump at a conclusion, Hazen," said Diamond Dick, Jr., dryly. "Remember Davy Crockett's motto, 'Be sure you are right and then go ahead.' I wasn't born just when you think I was, and right here is where you're going to find it out."

Bertie's whole manner had changed. He was no longer the slouching, swaggering Andy Meeker, and he had no longer the hoarse dialect of the frontier.

Rising from the chair, he looked the astounded oil manipulator squarely in the eyes.

Now that young Diamond Dick had found out that Hazen wanted the seal ring which had belonged

to Tilbury's father simply to use in sealing a document to which the elder Tilbury's name was forged, Hazen's entire game was disclosed, and there was no longer any use of secrecy.

"Who—who—are you?" faltered the oil man, white to the lips and a glassy stare coming into his eyes.

"I'm Bertie Wade, otherwise Diamond Dick, Jr.," replied the young sport. "I was the one you hired to knock young Tilbury on the head and throw him into the Burning Spring, and I'm the one who just witnessed that forged document in your possession. There is only one way you can square yourself, and that's by giving Ev Tilbury the interest in the Mesa Hill Oil Company to which he is justly entitled. You have tried to play a desperate game, Hazen, but you have overreached yourself. We will be easy with you if you will treat young Tilbury fairly and—"

"Never!" roared Hazen.

As in a flash, the villainous oil man seemed to collect himself for a desperate deed. A moment more and he had hurled himself upon the young sport and borne him backward against the swaying canvas partition.

The young sport was not at all alarmed by this attack. Wrenching his right hand free of the flabby hold which Hazen had upon it, he doubled the fist and knocked his enemy backward.

But even as he did so there was a sudden outward bulging of the canvas wall behind the young sport's head and he was struck a terrific blow by an unseen foe who had been lying in wait.

Bertie's brain reeled, and he staggered and threw out his hands to catch hold of something and steady himself.

Then once more that hidden hand landed a blow and Diamond Dick, Jr., pitched forward and lay at full length on the floor.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BOWSTRING.

Diamond Dick, Jr., struggled back to consciousness after a period which might have been hours in duration, or only minutes. He had no means of judging of the flight of time.

He was lying in a small room on a cot, bound hand and foot.

This room had the same canvas partition walls that the other room had had.

Aside from the cot there was a chair in the room, and there was also one window to admit daylight.

In the chair, near the head of the cot, a Chinaman was sitting.

He was not of the ordinary run of Chinamen, and was at least six feet in height and developed other ways in proportion.

He must have come from the north of China, the home of the Boxers, from which but few of the natives ever migrate.

The Celestial wore a mustache, thin, and drooping far down on either side of his mouth; and his pigtail, as he sat, fell to the floor and coiled there, and was, as the young sport languidly figured it, about as long as its wearer.

The Chink's face was extremely yellow and ill-favored, and his slanting eyes were full of guile and viciousness.

His gaze was bent downward upon the cracks of the floor and he seemed to be doing something with his long, talon-like hands—aimlessly twisting and intertwining his skinny fingers as Bertie finally made out.

It was some time before the Chinaman discovered that the prisoner had recovered his senses, and when he did make the discovery he braced up in his chair with a demoniacal grin and reached for the end of his queue and brought the hairy rope around in front of him so that it rested on his lap.

“Who hit me from behind?” inquired the young sport.

“No savvy,” answered the Chink.

“Where is Hazen?”

“No savvy Hazen.”

“How long am I to be kept here?”

“Me fixee you chop-chop.”

“How?”

The Chinaman lifted the queue and gave it a significant shake.

Bertie did not understand what the gesture meant, but he succeeded in realizing, in spite of his aching head, that he was in a pretty tight corner.

He was about to continue his questioning of the Chinaman when the hall door opened and two men came in.

The first man was short and thick-set, and had a belt with revolvers buckled about his waist.

The second man had a foot bandaged and stumped limpingly along with a cane.

A glance at the face of the second man proved to the young sport that he was the outlaw who had escaped during the set-to on the trail, and after whom the New York kid had raced.

The outlaw had got away, had managed to reach the Four-Mile House, and what had become of Two-Spot?

This question flashed through young Diamond Dick's mind and brought with it a good deal of worry. He was fearful that the Bowery boy had gotten himself into trouble.

The Chinaman got up and pushed back from the cot, and the two newcomers passed to the young sport's side and looked down at him.

“He's the feller, Jarvis,” said the outlaw.

“Sure of it, Bill?”

“Kain't be mistook, uhow.”

“I thort he was kinder throwin' it inter Hazen when he said he was Diamond Dick, Jr., but I reckon ef he's the feller that put up that game fight on the trail thar ain't no doubt about it.”

“You bet thar ain't no doubt about it. I don't know of anybody but one o' the Dicks who'd put up a fight ag'in three of us, like he done. We'd hev done him up ef some friends o' his hadn't kimerlong.”

“An' Andy and Kemp was captered?”

“Thet's the size of it.”

“Then thet settles it. When Hazen offered me five hundred ter have San Wah use the bowstring on him, I kinder held off, kase Hazen's bizness ain't none o' mine; but now thet I know how he's played hob with Andy an' Kemp, I'd jest as soon hev the bowstring used on him as not.”

Diamond Dick, Jr., as soon as he had satisfied himself of the identity of the outlaw, had closed his eyes.

Jarvis and Bill, thinking him still unconscious, had not hesitated to talk, and what Bertie heard gave him a pretty fair idea of the situation.

“As soon as we git out o' here, San Wah,” Jarvis went on, speaking to the Chinaman, “you can get in your work.”

“Allee light,” answered the Chink.

Thereupon the two white men would have left the room had not the young sport opened his eyes and spoken.

"Wait a little, you fellows."

"Ah, ha!" cried Jarvis. "What the blazes did ye git back yer senses fer? It would have been better fer ye ef ye'd taken yer jump inter kingdom come while out o' yer head."

"I think I'll postpone that jump into kingdom come."

"I don't think ye will. It's booked ter happen in erbout three minits an' it'll be pulled off accordin' ter programme."

"The date will have to be canceled, Jarvis."

"Ye're torkin' through yer hat. It ain't goin' ter be as you say, but as I want it."

"Look here," returned Bertie, who was disposed to argue the point since there was no other way open, "the authorities would like to get a whack at you, Jarvis, and if you do me up it will be a job for which they can swing you."

"They won't know anything about it," answered Jarvis. "Ye kain't make me shy at this, young feller. I ain't doin' this on Hazen's account, though, don't think that fer a minit. Ef you hadn't captered Andy Meeker I might hev held off from the killin' job. But it's no good fer ye ter tork now. My mind is made up."

"Thet's the stuff," growled Bill, with a black look. "What's the use in ringin' in the Chink on this deal? He an' his bowstring, as ye call it, may be all right, but I'll gamble that I can do the work with my bowie in half the time."

"Ye might be able ter do it in half the time, Bill," answered Jarvis, "but ye couldn't do so artistic a job. When San Wah gits through thar won't be no blood ner anythin' else ter show what was done. He's a crackerjack at thet kind o' thing—used ter do it in his own country fer the emperor. Come on!"

The two men started from the room, but Jarvis halted at the threshold and made a suggestive sign to San Wah.

The latter nodded to show that he understood, and the proprietor of the Four-Mile House and the outlaw passed into the hall.

The instant the door was closed, San Wah became as quick in his movements as a cat.

He kicked off his sandals and pushed up his baggy silk sleeves to his elbows; then he laid hold of his queue and stepped noiselessly to the cot.

Every moment of the time he had been talking, Diamond Dick, Jr., had been straining at the rope

which bound his wrists, hoping against hope that he might be able to wrench his hands free and thus have it in his power to do something for his own protection.

This hope proved vain, however.

He had been most securely tied and his bonds would not give the fraction of an inch.

He was completely at the mercy of the Chinaman, and all struggling was useless.

With a quick, deft movement, San Wah lifted the head of his intended victim and looped his long pigtail about his throat; then, catching the makeshift bowstring in either hand, he dropped a knee on Diamond Dick, Jr.'s breast and began to exert a steady but persistent pressure.

The young sp̄t felt the coil tighten about his neck and knew that it would be only a few moments before he would be choked and unable to make a sound. In order to make the most of his voice while he was yet able to speak, he let off a loud cry for help, and continued it until the pressure of the queue set him to gasping for breath.

At just the moment when Diamond Dick, Jr., felt that his end was at hand, he saw the canvas wall opposite part away in a long rent and through this slit the face of the New York kid presently emerged.

Two-Spot was but a moment in taking in the situation, and sprang noiselessly into the room, revolver in one hand and knife in the other.

Tossing the revolver into the air, the boy caught it by the muzzle, and the next instant he had struck the Chinaman a stunning blow on the back of the head.

CHAPTER V.

TWO-SPOT STARS HIMSELF.

There were several things about the New York kid which made him a favorite of the Diamond Dicks, but the principal item in the list was this: No matter what happened to him he never lost his head. He was perfectly cool in every situation, and was never so clever in expedients as when forced into a corner.

It had worked him up a good deal to have the outlaw get away from him, and the fellow would not have got away if Two-Spot had not been considerate enough to shoot him in the foot instead of in some more vital place.

The New York kid wanted to make the outlaw a

prisoner and not to take him with his "boots on," as the saying is.

Failing in this, he was only too eager to leap into his saddle and chase after the man.

Owing to the fact that the outlaw had a much faster horse than Two-Spot's the chase did not turn out to be a success.

Nevertheless, the New York kid continued to follow the gun-fanner, although the latter steadily increased his lead.

It was not long before the outlaw concluded that it would be best to turn from the road, and did so.

The chase was now through the timber, and, to Two-Spot's intense satisfaction, he appeared to be gaining upon the man in front.

Pushing steadily on he at last came upon the horse which the gun-fanner had ridden, loping easily along, but with an empty saddle.

"Wouldn't that upper-cut you?" thought Two-Spot. "The geezer slid out of his saddle and left me to peg along on the trail of the bronk! I'm a loo, and no mistake."

Gathering in the horse, Two-Spot returned to the trail and made his way to the Four-Mile House.

As the boy figured it, there was only one place to which the outlaw could or would go, and that was to the Jarvis hang-out.

Two-Spot did not ride up to the front of the building and hitch the two horses there, but secured the animals in the woods and advanced upon the house from the rear.

This maneuver carried him close to the barn, and, hearing voices inside, he dropped down on his knees and began to use his ears.

"I don't believe it was Diamond Dick, Jr.," said a voice.

"I don't know whether it was or not," a second voice answered, "but it may be. Old Diamond Dick is in Oil City, and I think he's helping young Tilbury to prove that he's entitled to an interest in my oil holdings."

"Kin he do it?"

"Not if I know myself, Jarvis."

"You're a sly fox, Hazen. To beat you out a man has got ter git up in the mornin'."

"You bet he has—and keep awake all day."

"I know how we can find out if the fellow is Diamond Dick, Jr."

"How?"

"That's a man jest come in, wounded in the foot, an' he claims ter hev had a set-to with young Diamond Dick an' Han'some Harry, an' to hev got away after a hard chase. He says young Diamond Dick is in disguise, an' he kin tell whether this feller is the man er not."

"I don't care who the man is, he's got to be put out of the way. You can have your Chinaman do the job, Jarvis—he can use the bowstring as he has done more than once before."

"I don't like ter do it."

"Bosh! The Chink had just as soon do the job as to eat a meal. I'll give you \$500, and you can give the Chink fifty out of it and be a whole lot to the good."

"An' arter the job is done, mebby ye'll treat me like ye treated that feller who says he's Diamond Dick, Jr.—hire some 'un ter knock me on the head from behind a canvas wall an' so git out o' payin' the five hundred."

"Look here, Jarvis, you know me better than that. I never fail to pay an honest debt. In this case, if the prisoner up in that room in the hotel is really Diamond Dick, Jr., then he never did what I hired him to do at the Burning Spring, and I don't owe him anything but a rap on the head that will settle him."

"Waal, I'll do what ye say, Hazen, but I don't like it."

"You'll like it well enough when you get the five hundred, Jarvis. Lead out my horse and hitch him to the buckboard. I've got the fight of my life on my hands and can't waste any more time here."

Two-Spot heard all this and had just time enough to dodge back behind the stable as Jarvis and Hazen came out, the former leading a harnessed horse.

The horse was hitched to the buckboard, and Hazen climbed into the vehicle and drove away.

Jarvis watched him out of sight and then re-entered the house.

The reader may well surmise that Two-Spot was not a little wrought up over what he had heard.

Young Diamond Dick was in the hangout and had been foully dealt with.

The wounded outlaw was also in the house.

The house, therefore, was the place for the New York kid, and he sprinted across the open stretch that lay between the house and the barn and quickly and noiselessly entered at the kitchen door.

There was an Indian girl working about the kitchen, but she hardly gave the New York kid a glance and seemed to take his presence there as a matter of course.

For a moment Two-Spot was "stumped," as he might have expressed it.

Noticing that the Indian girl did not consider him of much importance, he made bold to ask for Mr. Jarvis.

A grunt was his only answer, the girl keeping right on with her work.

"Is Mr. Jarvis here?" repeated the Bowery boy.

Another grunt was the girl's response, and Two-Spot took the bull by the horns, passed across the kitchen and entered a door which led into the front part of the house.

When he closed the door and looked around he found himself in a narrow hall with a flight of stairs leading upward.

Recalling what Hazen had said, in his talk with Jarvis about the prisoner being "up in that room," Two-Spot inferred that Bertie was being kept upstairs, so he started up the flight.

Before he was half way to the floor above he heard voices which indicated that there were several besides Diamond Dick, Jr., in the second story of the hang-out.

But this did not deter the New York kid.

He knew that Diamond Dick, Jr., was in grave danger, and the fact that there were others with him only had the effect of making the boy desire to get in touch with him as soon as possible.

On reaching the head of the stairs, Two-Spot heard the rattle of a doorknob.

He took note of the door and quickly side tracked himself through an entrance next to it, on the left.

This brought him into the chamber where Diamond Dick, Jr., had had his interview with Hazen, and next to the one where the young sport was being held as a prisoner.

Jarvis and Bill had finished their talk with Bertie and Two-Spot heard them leave the next room and pass down the stairs.

Then, the next thing the New York kid heard was Diamond Dick, Jr.'s call for help.

The time had come for the boy to act, and he lost not a moment.

To jerk his knife from his pocket and slash a rent in the canvas partition was only the work of a

second; nor was he much longer in pushing his head through the opening and sizing up the situation.

After that he pulled his revolver, sprang in behind the Chinaman, and struck him with the butt of the weapon.

A sound, midway between a gurgle and a groan, escaped the lips of San Wah, and Two-Spot struck him again.

The second blow sent the highbinder to the floor like a log, the looped pigtail half dragging Diamond Dick, Jr., from the cot.

In a flash, the New York kid had released the young sport, disengaging San Wah's queue from about his neck and cutting the cords from his wrists and ankles.

Diamond Dick, Jr., got up gasping, and leaned against the side of the building for an instant to recover his breath.

While he stood by the window, quick steps were heard on the stairs.

Bertie realized then that his loud call for help had reached the ears of Jarvis and the outlaw, Bill, and they were no doubt coming up to lend their aid in case San Wah needed it.

Whirling about, the young sport placed his finger to his lips in token of silence and then pointed to the form of the prostrate Chink.

The New York kid caught his friend's meaning and dropped down on San Wah and gave him a dose of his own medicine by twisting his queue around his yellow neck.

Meanwhile Bertie, catching up the chair, sprang to the door.

By that time the steps which had been heard on the stairs had mounted to the top and were now coming hurriedly along the hall.

"What's the matter in there, San Wah?" demanded the voice of Jarvis as the steps halted at the door.

"Evelthing alle light," answered Bertie, mimicking the Chinaman's tone and "pidgin."

"Need any help?"

"No wantee help. Dimun Dick he gone top-side."

"Out of the game, is he?"

"You bettee."

"Then we'll come in and have a look at him."

That was precisely what Diamond Dick, Jr., had been seeking to avoid.

But the two men were coming in in spite of him. Lively work would have to be in order if the young sport saved himself and the New York kid.

The door opened even as Jarvis announced his intention of entering, and Diamond Dick, Jr., struck out savagely with the chair.

CHAPTER VI.

OUT OF THE TOILS.

Probably Gig Jarvis received the surprise of his life when he stepped across the threshold of that room and received a blow which sent him to his knees.

When he recovered from his bewilderment, he found himself looking into the muzzle of the New York kid's revolver.

"Stow your guff!" muttered Two-Spot. "Open your trap and let out even so much as a whisper and I'll pepper you!"

This threat was sufficient, and Jarvis remained on his knees blinking at the threatening tube of the shooter.

The outlaw, Bill, had been close behind Jarvis and Bertie had dropped the chair, grabbed him by the shoulders and hauled him inside, neck and heels.

Bill began to swear.

"Cork!" hissed the young sport in his ear, casting him to the floor and jerking the revolvers from his belt. "You're in this thing up to your eyes, Bill, and I had as lieve shoot you as to kill a rattler. And I'd go out of my way to kill a rattler any day of my life."

The noise in the room had aroused Mrs. Jarvis, and she could be heard mounting the stairs with the agility of an antelope.

Bertie set his back against the hall door and brought both revolvers which he was holding to bear on Bill.

"Hist!" he whispered.

The next moment Mrs. Jarvis tried the door, but, of course, could not open it.

"Jarvis!" she cried, excitedly. "What's the matter? What's wrong?"

"Clear out!" growled Bertie, imitating the voice of Jarvis as near as he could. "Vamos! Thar ain't nothin' the matter."

Perhaps, if Mrs. Jarvis hadn't been so greatly excited she would have noticed the difference between the young sport's imitation and the real article.

As it was, however, she heaved a sigh of relief and retreated.

"I heard a noise up here and thought there was a row," she remarked, as she went down the hall.

"Bring up a riata," Bertie called after her.

"All right, Jarvis," she answered.

Mrs. Jarvis was not long in returning with the riata, and, while she was gone, Bertie covered Bill and the New York kid covered Jarvis, the Chinaman obligingly remaining in a trance.

When the woman got back with the rope, the young sport slipped one of the revolvers into his pocket, kept the other pointed at Bill, opened the door a crack with his left hand and took the riata and then closed the door again.

"Is that all you want me to do, Jarvis?" asked the woman.

"Thet's all."

Mrs. Jarvis went away, and when he heard her close the door at the bottom of the stairs Bertie dropped the coiled rope on the floor and kicked it toward Two-Spot.

Then, drawing his second revolver, Diamond Dick, Jr., pointed it at the proprietor of the Four-Mile House, thus drawing a bead on both Jarvis and Bill at the same time.

"Take Jarvis' guns away from him, Two-Spot," said Bertie in a low, quick voice.

"On the jump," answered the New York kid, and at once removed Jarvis' weapons and stowed them away about his clothes.

"Now cut off four lengths of that rope, Two-Spot," went on young Diamond Dick, "and truss up Jarvis wrist and ankle, and treat the Chink in the same way. After that tie the other man's hands behind him."

"Correct," Two-Spot answered and went about his work with the utmost dispatch.

Long training with the Dicks had given the New York kid a great facility in matters of the kind, and he carried out the young sport's orders quickly and thoroughly.

Not only did he tie Jarvis and the Chink as directed, but he also gagged San Wah with his own queue and twisted a bandanna handkerchief between the jaws of the proprietor of the hang-out.

"Now we're ready for the road," said Bertie. "Have you got a horse, Two-Spot? Did you bring your mount with you to the Four-Mile House?"

"Sure thing, and Bill's horse along with it."

"Good enough. Help Bill down the stairs. I'll be tight at your heels with a gun, and if Bill makes any fuss he'll stop a bullet."

Two-Spot lifted the outlaw from the floor and opened the door leading into the hall.

Before starting from the room, Diamond Dick, Jr., halted to speak a few words to Jarvis.

"But for the bother you'd make us, Jarvis, we'd take you along. As it is, however, we shall have to leave you here for the present. But I will enter complaint against you at Oil City, and I think the authorities have got what they have been waiting for—a charge against you that will stick."

Jarvis growled some incoherent answer under the gag, and the young sport motioned to Two-Spot to march on with the prisoner.

As luck would have it, there was no one in the barroom below stairs, not even Mrs. Jarvis.

As soon as the little party got out in front, Diamond Dick, Jr., took Bill in hand while the New York kid ran to the place where he had secured the two horses and brought them up at a double-quick.

Bill was made to get astride his own horse, and was fastened to the saddle; then the young sport took the bridle reins and the three horses were off at a gallop.

"Three times three and a tiger!" cried Two-Spot, waving his hat exultantly. "That's the time we got there with both feet, Bertie."

"That's another time that you starred yourself, Spotty," answered young Diamond Dick.

"Forget it, cull! It's a saw-off, if I know one when I see it. We're both one-two-seven this trip."

Half-way to Oil City the old Serpent of Siskiyou was met, charging along in the direction of the Four-Mile House.

From his actions, no less than from the wild pace at which he rode, Bertie and Two-Spot were satisfied that there was something on his mind.

At sight of his two pards, Harry pulled up his smoking horse and let off a yell that would have raised the dead.

CHAPTER VII.

HAZEN IN TROUBLE.

"Gle-ory to snakes an' all sashay! Do my eyes deceive me? Is that the son of his dad, a loarin' off the trail, an' is that ace-high, up-ter-the-minit New

York kid rarin' along on his left, an' is that our old friend, the gun-fanner, betwixt the two? Am I dreamin'?"

"It's no dream, Red-Top," returned the Bowery boy. "You're next to the real thing and no mistake."

Handsome Harry jerked a big red handkerchief from his pocket, pulled off his broad-brimmed hat and mopped his face.

"Durn me fer a dummy ef I haven't been havin' a time," said he.

"Did your prisoners get away?" asked the young sport.

"Nary, son, but that's all kinds o' yarns afloat in Oil City. They're sayin' that that young Tilbury has been put out o' the way by some 'un, or other ——"

"I expected they'd say that."

"An' they're lettin' off their bazoos to the effect that young Diming Dick, chip o' the old block an' the ekai of any, bar none, has been done up."

"There was no foundation for that story."

"It came mighty close to a foundation, though, I tell you those," put in Two-Spot, with a wag of the head. "We've had close shaves together, Bertie, but this was a little the closest yet. We had the entire outfit against us at the Four-Mile House, Harry, and we won out, hands down. It was one of the slickest dodges the son of his dad ever put through, no stringin'."

"Mebbe that's nothin' in the story," went on the old Serpent, "an' I'm obliged ter reckon that ain't, seein' as how Bertie's on deck an' all to the good, but the Oil City sher'f is comin' this way, throttle wide open an' a nigger on the safety valve."

"Bully! The sheriff can go on to the Four-Mile House and pinch Gig Jarvis."

"Is that a case ag'inst Jarvis at last?"

"The biggest kind of a case. Has Hazen shown up in Oil City?"

"He has that—big as life an' twicet as ornery. Thar's a mob arter him."

"A mob? What for?"

"He tried ter beat a farmer out of some land in the oil belt——"

"An old game of his."

"I b'leeve ye. Waal, this hyer farmer come ter Oil City, got a gang o' men tergether, told 'em what

Hazen had done, an' say! they've got Hazen lookin' two ways ter save his neck."

"Would they hang him?"

"They wouldn't do anythin' else. Purty nigh every man in the outfit has got a rope. The mob is arter Hazen, an' ole Diming Dick is arter the mob. Ye see, Dick don't want Hazen put out o' the way jest yet. This hyer bizness of young Tilbury's has got to be cleaned up fust. Arter that Dick don't keer a rap what happens ter Hazen, who is more kinds of a tin-horn than I kin lay tongue to."

As Handsome Harry finished talking, a party of horsemen broke into sight through a cloud of dust.

"Hyer they aire now," cried Harry, facing his horse about. "The sher'f an' his posse, son!"

There were four men with the sheriff, all toting weapons and looking as though they meant business.

"Who are these men, Harry?" asked a lengthy individual who rode in the lead.

"Diming Dick, Jr., is one of 'em, Medford," answered the old Serpent, "Two-Spot Peters, the New York kid, is another, an' the third embray is one of Andy Meeker's men."

"Which is Diamond Dick, Jr.?" inquired the sheriff, looking at the young sport doubtfully.

"Here," answered Bertie, with a laugh. Then, without dismounting, he began divesting himself of his disguise, removing coat, trousers and hat and throwing the garments down at the trailside.

After that he drew his sombrero from the breast of his short jacket, knocked out the wrinkles and placed the hat on his head.

"Diamond Dick, Jr., Medford," the young sport went on, reaching from his saddle to grasp the sheriff's horny hand.

"Then ye wasn't killed, arter all?" queried Medford.

"Hardly."

"I reckon it's up to us ter turn tail an' take the back track with ye, hey?"

"No. Keep right on until you get to the Four-Mile House. Unless Mrs. Jarvis has released them, you will find Jarvis and a big Chinaman bound and gagged in a room on the second floor. Bring them to town."

"Has Jarvis been up ter somethin' we kin put him through fer?"

"Yes."

"Thet's the best news I've heerd in quite a spell. We'll git 'em ef they're thar, Dimun Dick, Jr."

Medford turned to his men.

"Spurs an' quirts, boys!" he shouted. "Hyer's our chance at Gig Jarvis, at last!"

"Whoop-ee!" shouted the men, and away they went at top speed.

"It'll be a sorry day fer Jarvis ef he tries ter fight with that outfit," remarked Handsome Harry. "They're Rangers, to a man, an' fightin' comes second nature to 'em."

"While they ride one way," observed Diamond Dick, Jr., "it's up to us to ride as fast the other. I have an idea that there's something warm and lively on the docket in Oil City."

"Scoot on ahead, son," said Harry. "Diming Dick is kinder hangin' fire waitin' ter git a report from you. Spotty an' I will foller with this pris'ner, an', mayhap, we'll be on hand ter j'ine in the fracas ef one happens ter be turned on."

"All right, old pard," answered Bertie, and relinquished the bridle rein of Bill's horse into the old Serpent's hand.

The young sport's mount had both bottom and speed, and the horse gave ample evidence of his qualifications while hustling young Diamond Dick into Oil City.

As the tall derricks, the spouting gushers, the shanties, the pumping and digging machines, and the big iron storage tanks of the town hove into sight, Bertie could see at a glance that there was some sort of excitement on.

People were running back and forth, or talking excitedly in groups—laborers in hip boots haranguing with better-dressed men, in the street or on platforms in front of store buildings.

For a speculator in an oil country to attempt to beat a man out of oil lands was as heinous an offense as horse stealing used to be in the early days of the West.

With a lynching in prospect it was hardly the right thing for the sheriff to take himself out of the town.

Medford might have been invited to make himself absent, however, and whenever such an invitation comes from half a hundred frantic citizens, the best thing any sheriff can do is to retire as gracefully as he can.

Or, if this had not happened, then Medford had pulled out in ignorance of what was taking place.

"Yes, et does; and not only you, but Rivero and Keegan hyer."

The boss of Terrible saw that he would have to say something that would smooth out Buford's suspicions, if he expected to get any service out of him in the pending crisis.

"Well, et ought to be as plain as the nose on your face where my interest is," he said. "I have got five thousand dollars interest in her, and I must see to et that no harm comes to her before I git my clutch on the goods. See?"

"Wull, who was goin' to harm her."

"I meant to see that nobody did, that was all. Come, Nick, no need our quarreling over et."

"No, I opine not, but I be durn ef I like to leave her with this hyer popper in her possession. No tellin' what harm she may do somebody with et ef we do."

"And you will all see what harm will be done, if you do not get out of here in a hurry," now cried the half-caste, taking the plug out of Buford's ear and stepping back and covering them all. "I have got a dose of pills here for somebody."

She spoke in a way that showed that she meant it, and they tumbled out of her presence with haste.

CHAPTER IX.

SURPRISE OF SURPRISES.

There was no further incident worthy of mention on the mesa the remainder of the afternoon.

Mercedes remained in her hut most of the time, where she was supplied with water and some coarse bread and smoke-dried meat.

Just as it was growing dark something came into the adobe house with a slight thud on the ground, and she made haste to see what it was, finding it was what she had waited for.

It was the material for her signal fire, or fire wheel.

An Indian maid, or at any rate, having Indian blood in her veins, and having lived all her life in an Indian pueblo, she was versed in all their arts, if arts will apply.

She set about her task immediately.

By the time it was thoroughly dark it was done.

She had worked in darkness, but her fingers were thoroughly familiar with the work.

Just as she finished, there was a presence in the doorway.

"Are you here?" was whispered in Spanish.

"Yes, I am here," was the response.

"Then now is your chance. Whom would you signal?"

"My people."

"For what purpose?"

"That they may rescue me."

"Is that all?"

"And that they may punish my captors."

"Is that all?"

"Yes."

"What of me?"

"You can escape with me."

"You mean it?"

"Certainly I mean it."

"Very well, it is a bargain."

"Is the coast all clear that way?"

"Yes, and now is your chance. Wait one minute till I get away."

"All right."

"Then I will give you about a minute to wave your signal before I will discover you."

"That will be sufficient."

"Then act now, while the gang are at their mess."

"Si, señor."

The Mexican passed on, and the girl slipped out of the hut.

She hastened to the edge of the mesa, or as near it as she dared to approach for fear of losing her footing.

There she lighted a match and applied it to her hoop, and in two or three seconds it was a hoop of living fire, and she twirled it rapidly around and around.

"Now, mi madre," she said, in a half whisper, "you know where I am. I know your eyes never tire when you watch for a sign. Here it is; you know where I am; you know that all is well or the signal would not be thus. Now, then, do you your part!"

Of a sudden came a shout.

It was from the direction of the cluster of adobe houses.

With a cry, the half-caste dropped the hoop of fire, and it went on a spin down the side of the mesa.

"Zamacuco! What do you there?"

It was the voice of the guard.

Instantly the girl left the spot, making a detour in the direction of her hut.

"What is the matter?" called the voice of El Raton.

"A fire! A signal!"

"Where?"

"It was there, at the edge of the mesa."

"Fool! Why did you not shoot?"

"I thought to capture the idiot who was making it."

"Spread out, men, and we will have him," cried Raton.

"We have a traitor in camp!"

The whole evil crew of them was out now, and they ran this way and that, excitedly. But no one was to be seen.

It was dark, save for the stars and the faint light that came from some of the adobes.

Meantime, Mercedes was making haste to her hut.

As she entered, a strong arm seized her, and a hand was clapped over her mouth.

"Not a word, not a sound," was hissed into her

Several of the men carried ropes—indubitably suggestive of the mob's purpose when they once got their clutches on Hazen.

"Save me, save me!" implored Hazen, shaking with terror. "I'll do the right thing if you get me out of this, Diamond Dick! Save my life and I'll make everything right."

"That's all we'll save you for, Hazen," muttered the old veteran. "Cut him loose, Bertie, quick! Take him into that building yonder—into the rear door and out the front—then hustle him over to Chrisler's. Chrisler's house is close to the railroad track—watch the track and look out for a signal from me!"

Already the mob had caught sight of Hazen, and a triumphant yell went up from every throat.

To slash a knife through the rope that held Hazen to the derrick was the work of a moment, and then, holding onto the arm of the frightened oil man, the young sport dashed toward the small building which stood to the left of the derrick, and was used as a storage place for empty barrels.

"Stop!" yelled the crowd.

"We want that man!"

"Turn him over to us or we'll shoot!"

The shouts served merely to quicken the pace of the thoroughly frightened Hazen.

Into the storehouse he and Bertie dashed, and old Diamond Dick ran after them and posted himself in the doorway, weapon ready.

"Back!" shouted Diamond Dick, leveling his forty-fours at the foremost men of the mob who seemed bent on running him down.

"Clear the way or we'll kill ye!" was the answer.

"You'll not kill me, friend," was Dick's cool response, "and I'm not going to kill any of you."

"What're ye stoppin' us fer?"

"Because I have use for Hazen before you transact your business with him."

"Our bizness is more important than yours!"

"Possibly, but I'm first. I'm acting in behalf of young Tilbury."

"Tilbury's dead! Hazen has killed him ter git him out o' the way!"

"Tilbury's not dead!"

Evan Tilbury himself was the speaker and he crowded to the door and ranged himself at Diamond Dick's side.

For a moment the crowd was silent and it was

plain that they were wavering. But a shrill voice yelled:

"Tilbury's affair hasn't got nothin' ter do with mine! I'm the one he cheated! I'm the one he bunkoed out of a fortune! String him up on my account! Aire ye men, or cattle, that ye'll let a couple stand in yer way an' head ye off?"

It was the voice of the farmer who had first aroused the mob and started it on the warpath.

The voice was still powerful, and, before Diamond Dick, or Tilbury, could say a word in remonstrance, they had been swept aside like chaff and the rabble jammed in through the door of the storehouse.

When the last man was inside, the old veteran helped young Tilbury to his feet.

"We've got to get Hazen out of this or he'll be strung up before he has a chance to square himself with you," said Diamond Dick, after drawing the young man to one side.

"He's done for now," answered Tilbury. "He's in the storehouse, and nothing on earth can save him from that gang."

"He's not in the storehouse," answered Diamond Dick; "he's at Chrisler's."

"At Chrisler's?" echoed the amazed Tilbury.

"Yes," went on Dick, "and we've got to get him out of town in the shortest possible time."

"How can we do it?"

"Go down to the railroad depot, Tilbury, get a handcar and push it up the track behind Chrisler's house."

"Then where'll we go?"

"To Call-Out, the next town west. There we can get Hazen to make a settlement. Hurry! Time is short, and the whole town appears to be against Hazen."

"He has brought it all on himself," answered Tilbury, as he hastened away in the direction of the railroad depot.

When old Diamond Dick left the scene of the recent excitement, the mob was tumbling about the empty barrels, looking inside of each and expecting every moment to find the object of their animosity.

The veteran started for Chrisler's house on the young sport's horse, which was still standing where it had been left.

Chrisler did not live at a very great distance and, when Diamond Dick dismounted and ran into the house, he found Chrisler there, and Bertie, and Hazen,

The oil man was as white as death and as limp as a rag. His courage was entirely gone.

"They'll get me," he said, tremulously. "They'll go all over the town and they'll get me, sure!"

"It would be no more than you deserve if they did get you," answered Chrisler, shooting a look of contempt at Hazen. "You're the biggest villain unhung, and you know it."

"I've done wrong, but I'm willing to make up for it," said the trembling wretch. "Save my life, Diamond Dick, and I'll do whatever I can to make matters right."

"You'll have the chance to square yourself, never fear about that," answered the veteran. "Go upstairs, Chrisler," he added, turning to the owner of the house, "and look out toward the storehouse at the big gusher. We must keep track of the doings of the mob, if we can."

Chrisler sprang into the hall and then up the stairs two steps at a time.

"The mob is making for the railroad depot at a run!" he cried, in a few moments.

"If they once get to the depot it will only be a little while until they get here," groaned Hazen. "Something has got to be done, Diamond Dick! Something has got to be done right off! Good heavens! Why, they'd hang me! They'd hang me without a trial!"

"Of course they would," answered Diamond Dick, Jr.

"Something is going to be done," spoke up the veteran from a rear window, which overlooked the railroad track. "We'll save your neck, Hazen, and here's where we do it."

While speaking the last words Diamond Dick threw open the kitchen door and gave all in the room a sight of Tilbury, standing on a handcar, less than fifty feet away.

"Come on!" called Diamond Dick, and he, and Bertie and Hazen made a dash for the handcar and climbed aboard.

Far down the track the mob could be seen, hastening toward them in a straggling line, every man on a keen run.

"Hurry!" shouted the panic-stricken Hazen, laying hold of the handlebars and beginning to pump with all his strength. "Catch hold, all of you! Tilbury, bear down, bear down!"

There was something of the irony of fate in this

demand which the oil man made upon the son of his former partner.

He was urging Evan Tilbury to help in the saving of his—Hazen's—life; and Hazen, not many hours before, supposed that he had hired a ruffian to put Tilbury out of the way.

But young Tilbury, while he was making one stroke for Hazen, was making two for himself; for, if Hazen was saved, the Tilbury interest in the Mesa Oil Company would revert to young Tilbury without any question.

As the handcar glided away, old Diamond Dick shouted back to Chrisler, who stood in his kitchen door watching the flight and pursuit:

"Return Diamond Dick, Jr.'s horse to the barn, Chrisler!"

"Oh, confound the horse!" shouted back Chrisler. "Get that villain where he'll have to make things right with Ev."

"Rest easy about Ev," answered old Diamond Dick; "he'll come out on top and with ground to spare."

Then the handcar passed out of talking distance and the mob gave up the pursuit, came to a standstill, and shook their fists and yelled in baffled rage.

But it was the best thing that ever happened to those Oil City people that the Dicks succeeded in spiriting away their intended victim and saving them from committing a deed which, in after times, they would have deeply regretted.

CHAPTER IX.

HAZEN SETTLES WITH TILBURY.

The town west of Oil City succeeded in living and being prosperous in spite of its peculiar name of "Call-Out."

The handcar rolled into this place about the middle of the afternoon, and its passengers disembarked and made for the office of the nearest lawyer.

Hazen, now that he was safe from the mob, showed a disposition to dicker, and to drive a sharp bargain with young Tilbury. Old Diamond Dick put a quietus on that line of action and did it with his customary promptness.

"Don't forget, Hazen," said he, "that you're not yet out of the woods. Try to do anything but the right thing and I will have you arrested by the deputy sheriff who lives in this town and he will be

obliged to take you to Oil City and lock you up. I reckon you know what that would mean."

Hazen went white in an instant.

"Don't do that, Diamond Dick!" he pleaded.

"Then don't try any of your skin games. How much of an interest do you own in the Mesa Hill Oil Company?"

"Before I do a thing I must have your promise not to proceed against me for what I have attempted to do."

"Are you guilty of any crimes except those against the farmer, and Diamond Dick, Jr., and young Tilbury?"

"No."

"Then, if you will make matters right with Tilbury and the farmer we will not proceed against you."

"I have your word?"

"Yes."

"Then go ahead with your questions."

"How much of an interest have you in the Mesa Hill Company?"

"A third."

"Who owned the other two-thirds? Tilbury's father?"

Hazen nodded.

"Then that two-third interest goes to young Tilbury?"

"It does."

"Do you care to dispose of your interest?"

Hazen gave the old veteran a sharp look.

"Why?" he asked.

"I suppose you understand that it will hardly be safe for you to return to Oil City?"

"This trouble will all blow over," said Hazen, with an attempt at bravado.

"Whether it blows over or not," spoke up Ev Tilbury, "I wouldn't be in business with you a day, Hazen."

"I can't buy you out, I haven't the money."

"Then you'll have to sell. I haven't the money, either, but I could borrow it."

"You won't need to borrow it," said Diamond Dick. "On behalf of my pards and myself, I will purchase Hazen's interest, providing he is reasonable about naming a price."

"But I expect you to have part of my two-thirds for what you have done for me!" exclaimed Tilbury.

"If Hazen will sell," replied Diamond Dick, "we

will buy enough of your two-thirds to make us hold a half interest. I wouldn't want to go into the deal unless I could swing at least that much of the property."

"I'll sell," said Hazen.

"At what figure?"

"Well, say \$200,000."

"Cut it in half," said the veteran, "and I'll give you a check just as soon as I can satisfy myself as to your title in the property."

"Done!"

"That makes us owe you \$50,000 for enough of your two-thirds to give us a half share in the company," said the veteran, turning briskly upon Tilbury.

"But I don't feel as though I should take it after what you have done for me," protested the young man.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Diamond Dick. "Business is business, and sentiment is sentiment. This is a matter of business."

"Then of course I am thoroughly satisfied, but I wish to thank you from the bottom of my heart for what you have done for me."

"My boy," returned Dick, clasping the youth's hand, "we are glad indeed that fortune placed it in our way to be of service to you."

"There are one or two things yet to consider," said the young sport, pressing Tilbury's hand cordially when his father released it.

"What are those, Bertie?"

"Why, Hazen has Tilbury's ring——"

"Here it is," spoke up Hazen, taking the circlet from his pocket and handing it to Tilbury.

"And there is that forged quit-claim deed, Hazen," the young sport went on.

"Here is that, also."

Hazen handed over the document and the old veteran looked at it carefully.

"Now I see why you wanted that ring, Hazen," remarked Diamond Dick. "It's a seal ring and you wanted to press your partner's initials into the wax on this document."

"That's it," answered Hazen, unblushingly; "it would have added corroborative detail, so to speak."

The veteran gave Hazen a hard look.

"You're about the coldest-blooded scoundrel I ever saw in my life," said the veteran, "and I can assure you that I have seen a good many."

"There's no call for indulging in hard words," was the oil man's suave answer. "When our business is over we'll all cry quits and go our different ways."

"That's right," said Diamond Dick, "and see to it, Hazen, that your trail never crosses mine in the future. It won't be well for you."

The lawyer in Call-Out drew up the papers necessary in the case, and held them pending the closing of the deal.

The first passenger train back to Oil City carried the Dicks and Tilbury, and when they left Hazen they had told him that, as a preliminary to closing their deal, he must square himself with the farmer whom he had victimized.

Hazen promised that he would do this.

An Oil City attorney looked up the records for Diamond Dick and found the Mesa Hill Company in substantially the condition reported by Hazen.

This was some time on the day following the excitement at the big gusher, and after the attorney had made his report, the old veteran hunted up the farmer who had caused all the trouble on the preceding day and found out from him that Hazen had sent back the deed which he had secured by fraud and that the farmer had now no complaint to make.

Thereupon Diamond Dick sent the young sport to Call-Out with a certificate of deposit on the Ouray bank, made payable to the order of Jasper Hazen.

Bertie exchanged the money for the deed, and, as \$50,000 had already been given to Tilbury for part of his interest, Dick and his pards found themselves started in the oil business.

The first intimation that Harry had of what was going on was when he read the names of the parties of the second part in the two deeds given respectively by James Hazen and Evan Tilbury.

These names were as follows: Richard Wade, Bertie Wade, Handsome Harry and Two-Spot Peters.

The old Serpent could only stare at the deed and then at Diamond Dick in a sort of speechless dismay.

"Are—are we goin' out o' the railroad bizness, Dick?" asked Harry.

"Yes."

"But what's goin' ter become o' the road?"

"We're going to sell it."

Then Handsome Harry began to look as though he was sorry.

"I don't believe we ort to," said he.

"Why, you've been talking nothing else but sell for the last two months."

"I know, but—"

The old Serpent paused and cleared his throat.

"But what?"

"Why, durn it all, I was beginnin' ter think a heap o' that road, Dick an'—"

"Get a pail, get a pail," chirped Two-Spot, "Reddy's goin' to leak!"

A laugh went up from the Dicks, and Harry, after making a swipe at the grinning Two-Spot, settled back in his chair and resigned himself to the situation.

CHAPTER X.

CONCLUSION.

Harry and Two-Spot had brought in Bill, the wounded outlaw, and landed him safely behind the bars, along with Meeker and the other man.

The New Orleans detective was summoned by wire, and after he had seen the three men he not only identified Meeker as Phil Luray, but also recognized his two companions as men who were also wanted in Louisiana.

A requisition on the Governor of Texas was made, and the three outlaws were taken away and ultimately tried and convicted for their misdeeds.

The sheriff was not able to find Jarvis or the Chinaman.

Mrs. Jarvis had discovered the plight of the two men, shortly after Diamond Dick, Jr., and the New York kid had left the Four-Mile House with Bill.

After releasing her husband and San Wah they had taken two of the fleetest horses in the stable and fled to parts unknown.

As soon as she could sell out, Mrs. Jarvis followed her husband.

Thus that part of the country was cleared of a suspicious character, and it was just as well, perhaps, everything considered, that Jarvis and the Chink were able to make a run of it.

The Four-Mile House passed into the hands of a Kentuckian who was not only a law-abiding man, but who likewise had the sand and the capacity for preserving order and holding his own.

He did a prosperous business at the hangout, and ultimately lived down the evil reputation which the place had won for itself under the management o' Gig Jarvis.

The sale of the Tough-Nut and Pick-Me-Up Railroad was consummated by old Diamond Dick, who made a personal visit to San Francisco for the purpose of closing the deal.

The reader may remember how the road came into the hands of the Dicks, having been received by them in part payment for a gold mine; and the reader may also remember in what a sorry condition the line was in equipment, management and everything else.

Under the skillful control of the Dicks, and owing quite as much no doubt to their bold forays against the trouble-breeders and gun-fanners infesting the right of way, the road was raised to a high standard of excellence and became one of the best paying properties in the whole Territory.

All this was taken into consideration when the line was sold, and the old veteran and the young sport received a handsome profit over their original investment which repaid them handsomely for all their labors.

It will not be forgotten that Fritz Dunder, the "Hot Tamale," was in Ouray during the lively times in Oil City.

He had not accompanied Bertie, Harry and Two-Spot to Oil City for the reason that he had made an attempt to win \$5 by riding a broncho.

He had not won the \$5, but he had earned six full weeks in the railroad hospital, and was doing time in that institution when word came that the Dicks had sold the road and were to leave Ouray for good.

Fritz was all broken up over the matter, but a ray of comfort came to him in the person of Bung Loo, the clever young Chink, who had "trotted a few heats"—as Two-Spot would say—with the Dicks and had left Ouray to go to 'Frisco and accept a job offered him by the Six Companies.

But, after the times in Ouray, working for the Six Companies, writing bills backward, figuring items upside down and doing everything with a brush was altogether too slow for the progressive young Chink.

So he traveled back to Ouray, blew in on Fritz at the hospital, and helped to beguile the tedium of the Dutchman's convalescence.

When well enough, Fritz and Bung Loo started to rejoin the Dicks; and ultimately they did rejoin them, but only after they had passed through a series of hair-raising adventures which, although good enough

for a place all by themselves, will probably never be written down.

Hazen was never afterward seen in the oil country.

What became of him is not known, but a safe guess may be made to the effect that he continued his evil career in other parts and finally paid the penalty.

And, for a man as murderous as Hazen proved himself to be, it is not difficult to surmise that the penalty was the severest on the statute books.

The oil business was comparatively new to the Diamond Dicks and their pards, but they soon learned the ins and outs and began developing the Mesa Hill property, and acquiring other lands, in a way that brought them to the fore as the most progressive men in the fields.

But one result could happen.

The huge corporation which controls the oil market of the country stepped in, made a flattering offer, and took the entire plant off the hands of the Dicks and young Tilbury.

"Durn my buttons!" exclaimed the bewildered Handsome Harry, after the oil business had been sold out. "Wouldn't this hyer rattle yer spurs? We're makin' so many changes lately that I'm durned ef I know whar I'm at."

"What do you care so long as there's a lot doing and plenty of excitement on tap?" queried Two-Spot.

"I don't keer a picayune, Spotty, kase I'm willin' ter foller wharever the Dicks lead."

"It's a rocky trail they travel," said the New York kid, "but there's always something worth while at the end of it."

"What's next, Spotty? Do ye know?"

"I'm next, all right, Red-Top."

"Then cough it up and be *pronto* about it."

Two-Spot whispered in the old Serpent's ear and he nearly fell out of his chair.

"Drama? Catamounts an' hyeners! What am I ter do?"

"Give it up, but it'll be hot stuff."

THE END.

Next week's issue (No. 293) will contain, "Diamond Dick's Border Drama; or, A Scene Not Down on the Bills." It proved, as Two-Spot said, to be "hot stuff"—hotter stuff, in fact, than Two-Spot expected, and hot enough even to satisfy that old fire-eater, Handsome Harry, the Serpent of Siskiyou.

DO YOU WANT A COMPLETE FISHING ASSORTMENT?

LOOK ON THE BACK COVER OF No. 293 FOR A
PICTURE AND DESCRIPTION OF ONE.

If you enter this contest you will have a chance for the finest and most complete assortment of Fishing Tackle ever offered.

Seven Complete Assortments Given Away.

By winning a prize you can fit yourself out as a dealer in fishing supplies. The seven boys who send in the seven best contributions in this new . . .

AMATEUR JOURNALISM CONTEST

will each receive a Famous Fishing Tackle Assortment. Watch for a photograph and description of one on the back cover. Of course you want to own one. Then get into this contest without delay.

SEVEN COMPLETE OUTFITS GIVEN AWAY.

HERE ARE FULL DIRECTIONS:

Take any incident you can think of. It may be a fire, a runaway, an accident, an adventure, or even a murder. It doesn't matter whether you were there or not. Write it up as graphically as you can, make it full of "action," and send it to us. The article should not be over 500 words in length. The Contest closes September 1st. Send in your stories at once, boys. All the best ones will be published during the progress of the contest. Remember, whether your story wins a prize or not, it stands a good chance of being published, together with your name.

Cut out the accompanying Coupon, and send it, with your story, to the DIAMOND DICK WEEKLY, Care of STREET & SMITH, 238 William Street, New York.

No contribution with which a Coupon is not enclosed will be considered.

COUPON

Diamond Dick Weekly Amateur Journalism Contest No. 4

Name

Street and Number

City or Town

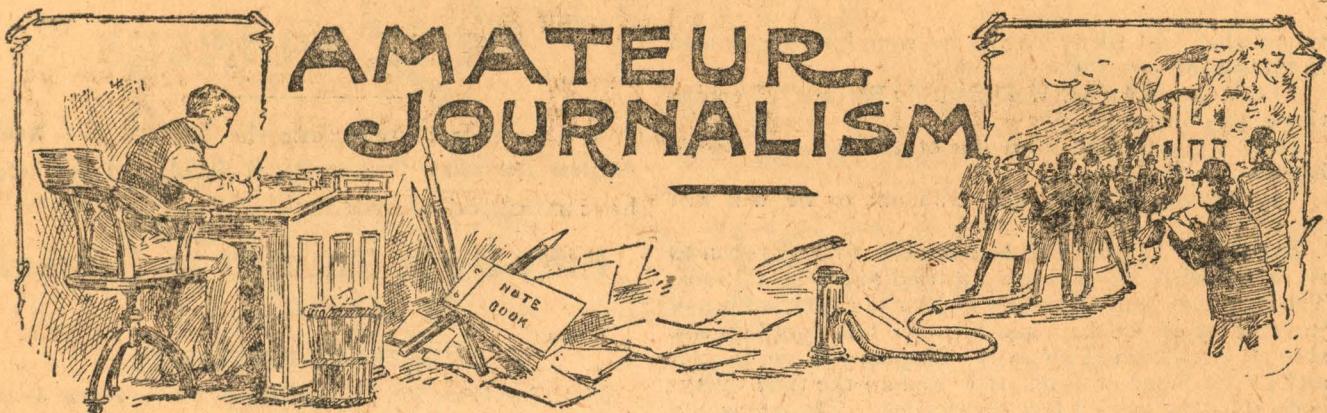
State

Title of Story

.....

LOOK FOR NAMES OF PRIZE WINNERS ON PAGE 28.

AMATEUR JOURNALISM



"Gle-ory ter catamounts and sarpints—a rip-roarin' hummer."

That's what this new contest is. Just look at that prize offer on the opposite page! Isn't that just what you wanted? Pitch in, boys; the more the merrier. We're off on this new contest at a gallop.

A Night with the Hazers.

(By Hugh B. Tabb, Ry.)

"Say, Drain, what do you say to having some fun to-night?"

The speaker was Logan English, the place was his room in the boarding-house of the Hardin Collegiate Institute.

"You know I'm in for anything. What is it?" said Karl Drain.

"I was thinking that we could get together a crowd of us sophomores and give the freshmen the surprise of their lives in the way of a hazing," continued Logan.

"Logan, you are a brick!" cried Karl, enthusiastically. "Of course we will."

Thus encouraged, Logan unfolded his plan, and if we judge it by the expression on Karl's face it must have been a capital one.

"Now, Karl, we must be off. Have all the sophomores to meet under that oak tree in the center of the campus at ten o'clock to-night. So long!"

Both boys now hurried away.

Karl Drain hopped into the rooms occupied by Burton Macy and Ed. Buchanan.

"Say, fellows!" he chirped, "if you want to see something that is more fun than a dog-fight, just come down to the front entrance."

The hour was late, but both jumped up and followed Drain. When they reached the entrance they were unceremoniously picked up in the arms of half-a-dozen sophomores.

Two other freshmen, big country hulks, whose room had been invaded, had put up a stiff fight. As a consequence, they had scored up against their account two sophomoric black eyes and a bleeding nose.

In this way a press-gang of twenty or more freshmen had been gathered out on the college campus. Each of them was armed with a broom, which he was required to handle as if it were an army rifle.

"Hep! hep! hep! Company—halt! Parade, rest! Company, 'tention! Line up for inspection! Carry—arms!"

English was drill-master, but had many lieutenants all armed with switches.

"Stand up straight! Bunch up! Head erect! Eyes to the front!"

Swish! swish! swish! went the switches.

"Wow!" Macy exclaimed. "It hurts! It hurts!" Buchanan "was hopping up and down like a chicken on a bed of live coals."

The two big countrymen near the head of the line were being unmercifully castigated.

"Now," said English, who wanted to humiliate the two all he could for what they had done, "being very prominent men, we desire people to know who you are. Put your arms about yonder light pole and continue to call as loud as you can!"

"We are two greasy old country sagers! Do you understand?"

"Yes—yes, sir!" said the now subdued freshmen.

The other freshmen were ordered to do almost everything ridiculous, but in the meantime the two country boys were clinging to the electric light pole crying out with the best power of their lungs:

"We are two greasy old country sagers! We are two greasy old country sagers!"

Truly enough, they were paying dearly for those blackened sophomoric optics and bleeding proboscis.

"Look out, boys! You had better scatter. The faculty thinks this has gone on long enough," said one of the sophomores. The result was that when the faculty arrived a few minutes later no one was in sight. That night, however, will be long remembered by both freshmen and sophomores at the dear old H. C. I.

Killing an Owl.

(By F. Leo Smith, Md.)

One day I went out with my .22 Winchester rifle to try to shoot some birds. I was only going around town and in the swamp near by. I met two other boys with air rifles, Eugene Hammond and Oscar Holbrewer, the latter known to the boys as Brigam; also about six other boys who did not have any rifles, but went along

to see what we killed. While we were hunting around in the swamp one of the boys said:

"Let's go up to Mr. Will Smith's Barrack. Perhaps there is an owl there."

So up we went, and when one of the boys got inside he said:

"Oh, here is a booby owl. Run out or he will kill you."

But it only happened to be a screech owl. As soon as we heard what he said we all tried to get in at once. The ones that had rifles shot at him and then we began jumping up on the hay, about twelve feet from him and shot all our ammunition away. Eugene put one eye out and I drew blood from his neck, and all the time everybody shouting and all terribly excited. The owl would fly from one side of the barrack to the other, the boys following him until at last some got on both sides with stones, clubs and anything to throw at him. One time when he went to one side Brigam hit him with his rifle and knocked him down on the hay, but he flew up again and flew to the side I was on. I had a large stone and was throwing at him as fast as I could. As he did not seem to want to move, Frank Thomas got near him and called to me to stop throwing, but I would say:

"Only one more time," but at last I thought if I did not hit him this time I would let Frank catch him. But that time I hit him and down he came, everybody talking as fast as they could.

Every one claimed the right to carry him, but at last they decided who should, and we all started for town, everybody telling what he did, and when we would meet anybody all of us would crowd around him, all trying to tell him at once.

At last we got over our excitement and parted, and went home, but for about a week we would tell everybody we met about the good time we had had killing that owl.

A Startling Adventure.

(By Charles Reed, Florida.)

When I was a little boy of about seven years old and was living in Minnesota I experienced a most startling adventure. While father and I were out hauling wood we heard an awful noise. We looked up the road and to our dismay saw a large fire sweeping down up on us.

Father whipped up the bronchos, and we had a hard race with the fire. We raced for about fifteen minutes or so then suddenly we came to the house just as the flames swept by us straight for the schoolhouse.

We jumped out and ran to the teacher's aid, for she was dragging the children out. Some of them fell down and fainted and some were so frightened that they did not know what to do, but stood stockstill.

Father fought the fire with the rest of the men while our boys carried the chairs and books out.

The men got shovels and dug a wide ditch around the schoolhouse, but the fire went on burning up all in its way. The wild animals ran for the open country, some were driven right in to the village, the deers ran into the town to get away from the fire. It was the worst sight I ever saw, and I don't care to go through it again.

If the firemen have to fight fire as we did I don't want to be one.

PRIZE WINNERS.

It is now three weeks since the Diamond Dick Weekly Amateur Journalism Contest No. 3 closed, and the judges have at last decided upon the

Fifty Boys Entitled to Prizes.

WINNERS OF FIRST PRIZE.

Oliver Jacobson, Wis.; E. P. Hinton, Ohio; George Burke, Ind.; Anzley Pulsifer, R. I.; Hugh Tabb, Ky.

The above boys are entitled to any ten books they may select from the list in No. 278.

WINNERS OF SECOND PRIZE.

Frank Graham, Mo.; E. A. Crawford, Fla.; R. Tipton Pawley, Mo.; Arthur Tuttle, Col.; William Pulver, N. Y.; R. V. Perine, La.; Chas. A. Reid, Fla.; Wolfrett Eldredge, Me.; Frank Von Au, Mich.; Leo Price, Ill.

The above boys are entitled to any four books they may select from the list in No. 278.

WINNERS OF THIRD PRIZE.

F. A. Bramhall, Me.; Manuel Vigil, Col.; Ed. Everson, R. I.; Charles Jaenes, Ill.; Cree Croft, Pa.; Frank Ross, Nev.; Guy Fitzgerald, Mich.; Parris Clay, Ky.; Frank Dutra, Mass.; Albert D. Kohn, Pa.; Charles Rogers, N. Y.; Bertie Ward, Mass.; Sherman Riggs, Ark.; Noel Winter, Conn.; William Hamilton, Mass.

The above fifteen boys are each entitled to any three books they may select from the list in No. 278.

WINNERS OF FOURTH PRIZE.

P. K. Green, Pa.; G. T. Davis, Ky.; Bertie Hall, Ark.; Leon Fullon, N. Y.; Charles Schroeder, Wis.; Herbert Wasle, Wis.; Henry Young, Mo.; Pearl Miller, Ohio; Chas. Lyon, Va.; Bentley Burns, Ind.; Chas. Lynch, Ill.; Alfred Kennedy, Col.; Geo. Schaeffer, Ia.; John Dugan, Wash.; Louis Barlow, Mass.; Lu Pollock, Ind.; Matthew Platt, Tenn.; Geo. Morrow, Ill.; Walter Kiefer, Ind.; J. M. Bowyer, Ga.

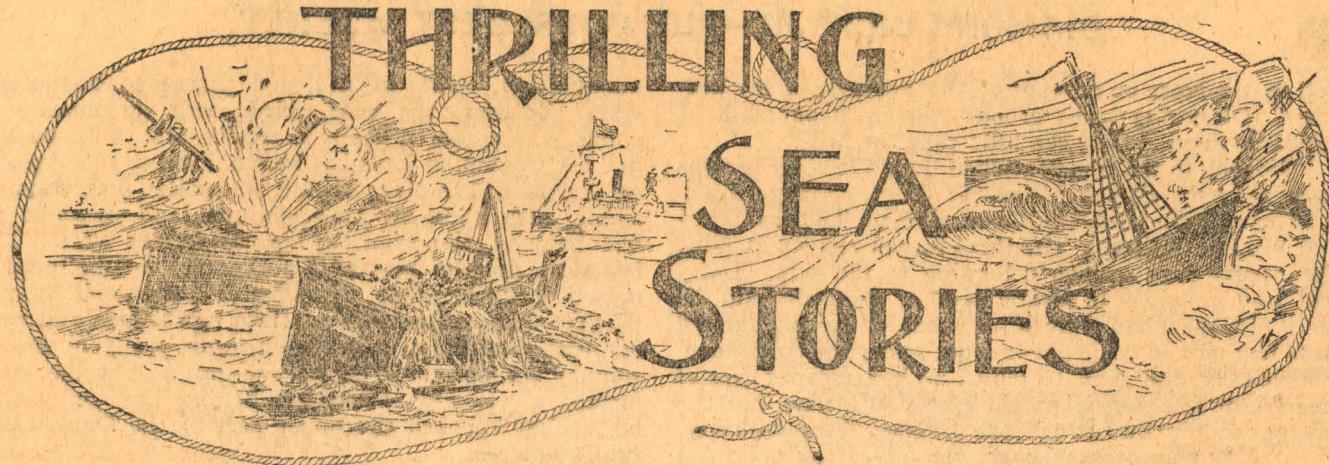
The above twenty boys are each entitled to any two books they may select from the list in No. 278.

IMPORTANT TO PRIZE WINNERS.

Every boy who sees his name in the list of prize winners should at once send his name, full address and titles and numbers of books he wants in the list in Diamond Dick Weekly No. 278 to Diamond Dick Prize Editor, care of Street & Smith, 238 William Street, N. Y.

Boys, we congratulate every one of you. Not only those who have won a prize, but those who have not, for you all did splendidly.

Remember, there's a new contest running, with splendid new prizes, and every one has a chance to enter it and win.



THRILLING SEA STORIES

WITH THE FIJI ISLANDERS.

BY MATE K.

The Hunter, a British vessel, sailed in 1872 on a cruise from Bengal to New South Wales, the Fiji Islands, and Canton. She was commanded by Captain Robson, and during her stay at Fiji her crew became involved in an affair with the islanders. The story was afterward related by one of the officers, Captain Dillon, in the following words:

"Early in September, two large canoes from Bow, carrying upward of two hundred men, visited the ship for the purpose of taking home certain Europeans and their wives. It was about this time that Captain Robson, being about sixty miles distant in the tender on an excursion against the Villear canoes, caught up with a whole fleet of these pirates, and, attacking them, captured no less than fourteen. It was an easy victory; but one of the natives happened to be killed with a cannon-shot. On his return to us, the captain proposed to heave the cutter down for repairs, as she had sustained some damage; but he deemed it prudent first to endeavor to possess himself of the rest of the Villear canoes, to prevent the savages from attacking our men while employed on the cutter, as it would be necessary to have that boat ashore at high water.

"On the morning of September 6, the Europeans belonging to the ship were all armed with muskets along with those from Bow, and the party was placed under the command of Mr. Norman, the first officer of the Hunter. We landed at a place called the Black Rock, where the two canoes shortly after joined us; the Bow chiefs having with them a hundred of their men. The boats and canoes then put off into deep water, so as to prevent their getting aground at the ebbing of the tide.

"Upon our landing, the Europeans began to disperse into small parties of two, three and four in a group. I begged of Mr. Norman to order the men to keep close together, but no attention was paid to my entreaties. We proceeded over a level plain without interruption till we arrived at the foot of a hill, which we ascended; and then a few natives showed themselves and tried to irritate us by their shouts and gestures. Turning to the right, Mr. Norman went along a path leading to some native huts, while I followed him with seven other Europeans, and the Bow chiefs with one of their men. Here a few savages tried to dispute our passage; but on one of them being shot dead, the rest retreated.

"Mr. Norman now caused the huts to be set on fire, an act of wanton destructiveness that cannot be defended. Shortly after we heard furious yells in the direction of the road by which we had ascended. The character of the sounds led the Bow chiefs to understand that some of their men, as well as Europeans, had been killed by the Villear natives, who had lain concealed until we had ascended to the tableland, when they attacked our straggling parties, of whom only two individuals escaped.

"There were ten musket men in our party, with the Bow chiefs and a follower. We immediately got out of the thicket on to the tableland, where there were three of the islanders who called out to us that several of our men were killed, and that we should share the same fate. Before descending to the plain, a young man, named John Graham, separated from us and ran into a thicket on the left of the road, where he was speedily pursued by three savages, and dispatched. As we descended we discovered that the plain between us and the boats was covered by thousands of infuriated and armed natives, who had prepared to give us a warm reception. When we got to the bottom of the hill, the savages stood on each side of the path, brandishing their weapons, and with their bodies and countenances besmeared with the blood of our slaughtered companions.

"At this moment, a native who had stealthily followed us down the declivity threw a lance at Mr. Norman, who, pierced through the body by the weapon, ran a few yards and then fell apparently dead. Turning round sharply, I fired at the native and reloaded my piece as quickly as possible; but when I looked for my companions, I found that they had fled in all directions, while the assembled islanders had quitted the path to pursue our flying men. I therefore dashed on as fast as I could, but had not gone above a few yards when I came upon the dead body of William Parker, which was lying across my path. Taking Parker's rifle from the ground where he had fallen, I beat a retreat from the scene of bloodshed.

"The natives, now observing me, gave chase, and to make good my escape from their vengeance, I was obliged to throw away Parker's musket, as well as the pistol I carried in my belt. I reached the foot of a small hill that stood in the plain, but found it impossible to

get to the boats on account of the nearness of my pursuers. Observing some of our men upon our right, I called to them: 'Take the hill! take the hill!'

"We got to the summit, when the following persons mustered with all possible speed: Charles Savage; Luis, a Chinaman, and Martin Bushart, with Thomas Dafry and William Wilson. The three former resided at Bow, the others were seamen belonging to the ship. Dafry had been wounded in several parts of the body, and the point of a spear had pierced his shoulder, having entered from behind and come out in front under the collarbone. Fortunately, the rock to which we had escaped was so steep that few persons could ascend at a time, but the savages shot arrows at us from the base of the declivity.

"I now took command of the party, and stationed each man in the best way possible under the circumstances. I did not allow more than one or two muskets to be fired at a time, and kept the wounded man loading for the others. Several of the natives, approaching too near, were immediately shot by us, which caused the remainder to keep at a respectful distance from the rock; but the savages had now gathered in the plain beneath us in considerable force, and surrounded our position with vehement yells, as a deed was about to be enacted of the most horrid and revolting character. Fires were speedily prepared, and ovens heated for the reception of the bodies of our ill-fated companions who had been slain; and, while the cannibals sang and danced with joy over the prizes, each corpse was placed in an oven to be baked as a repast for the victors.

"By this time the fury of the savages was somewhat abated, and they began to listen to our offers of agreement. I reminded them that eight of their men were prisoners on board the Hunter, and told them that if we were killed, these men would be put to death; but if we were spared, we would cause them to be released immediately. The head priest, who is regarded as a deity among the Fiji Islanders, asked if these men were still alive. I replied that they were, and I would send a man to the captain to order them to be released if he would convey my messenger safely down to the boat.

"This the priest promised to do, and I prevailed upon Dafry, who was wounded and without arms to defend himself, to venture upon this mission, under the escort of this venerable savage. Dafry was to inform Captain Robson of our horrid position, and that it was my particular request that he should release one-half the prisoners, after showing them a large chest of iron-mongery, whales' teeth, etc., which he might promise to give to the other four, with their liberty, the moment we returned to the vessel in safety.

"Dafry did as I directed, and I did not lose sight of him until he got on the ship's deck. A cessation of arms now took place; while several chiefs ascended the hill with professions of friendship, and offered security if we would go down with them. To this I would not accede, nor allow any of my men to do so, till Charles Savage, who had resided on the islands for more than five years, and spoke the native dialect fluently, begged permission to go down as he had no doubt their promises would be kept, and he would be able to procure a peace and obtain our safe return to the vessel.

"Overcome by his importunities, I at last consented, but told him that he must leave with me his musket and

ammunition. This he did, and proceeded to the spot where Bonaser, the head priest, was surrounded by chiefs, who appeared happy to receive him. Unknown to me, the Chinaman Luis had stolen down to the opposite side of the hill to place himself under the protection of a chief with whom he was acquainted, and to whom he had rendered important services in former wars. The islanders, finding they could not prevail on me to place myself in their power, sent up a yell that rent the air. At that moment Savage was seized by the legs, and with his head placed in a well of fresh water, was held in that state by six men until he was suffocated. At the same instant a powerful native got behind Luis and with a huge club knocked the upper part of the Chinaman's skull to pieces.

"There were now only three of us left upon the hill, and we were furiously attacked by the cannibals, who pressed closely upon us. Wilson being a bad shot, we kept him loading the firearms, while Bushart and I fired them off. Having four muskets we managed so that two of them always remained unloaded.

"Bushart was an excellent marksman. With twenty-eight discharges, he shot twenty-seven of the savages, only once missing his aim. I also killed and wounded some of the enemy, who, finding they could not conquer us without great loss to themselves, kept off and vowed vengeance. The human bodies being now prepared, they were taken from the ovens, and shared out to the different tribes of cannibals, who devoured their repast with avidity.

"Having now no more than seven cartridges left, we determined that as soon as darkness set in we would place the muzzles of our guns to our hearts, with the butts to the ground, and discharge the pieces into our breasts, thus to avoid the danger of falling alive into the hands of these cruel and merciless men. At this moment the boat put off from the ship and got close to the landing place, where we could see the eight prisoners being brought on purpose to give them their liberty.

"I could not imagine how the captain could be persuaded to act in this strange manner, as the only hope of our lives being spared was by allowing only a part of the prisoners to land, and by keeping the others on board, to give an incentive to the liberated islanders to intercede with their friends on shore to spare our lives, that we might in return protect their countrymen when we got on board the Hunter.

"Shortly after the prisoners landed they were conveyed unarmed up the rock to me. The eight natives were preceded by the priest, who informed me that Captain Robson had released them, and sent a chest of cutlery, etc., on shore for the chiefs, with orders for us to deliver our muskets to them, when the priest would see us safely to the boats. These terms I refused.

"The priest then turned to Bushart and harangued him on the policy of our complying. The thought now entered by head of making the priest my prisoner, and either to kill him or regain my liberty.

"Accordingly, I tied Savage's musket with my neck cloth to the belt of my cartridge box, and presenting my own musket to the priest's head, told him I would instantly shoot him if he attempted to run away, or if any of his countrymen offered to molest us. I then directed

him to proceed before me to the boat, threatening him with immediate death in case he did not comply with my orders.

"Thinking it prudent to obey, the priest led the way for us down the hill, and as we passed along through the multitude of natives he exhorted them not to molest us, for if they did so, he would be shot, and they would consequently incur the wrath of the gods, who would be angry at their disobedience of the divine commands, and would cause the sea to rise and swallow up the islands and all the inhabitants. The warning of their spiritual adviser caused all the cannibals to be seated forthwith upon the grass.

"The priest proceeded toward the boats, with the muzzles of Bushart's and Wilson's muskets at his ears, while the muzzle of mine was placed between his shoulders. On nearing the water he made a sudden stop. I ordered him to go on, but this he refused to do, declaring he would go no farther, and I might shoot him if I pleased.

"Threatening to take him at his word if he persisted in his obstinacy, I asked him why he would not go to the water's edge. He replied, 'You want to take me on board and put me to torture.'

"There being no time to lose, I told him to stand still, or I would shoot him if he attempted to move before I got into the boat. We then walked backward to the water side, and up to our breasts in water, when we embarked. But we were no sooner on board than the islanders came down to the beach and with their bows and slings saluted us with showers of arrows and stones.

"Being now out of danger, however, we returned thanks to Divine Providence for our escape and proceeded toward the ship, which we reached just as the sun was setting.

"I expostulated with Captain Robson on his extraordinary conduct in causing so many human beings to be unnecessarily sacrificed. He made some absurd apologies, and inquired if we were the only persons who had escaped. I replied that such was the case, but if the natives could have made proper use of the muskets which fell into their hands on that occasion we must all have been killed."

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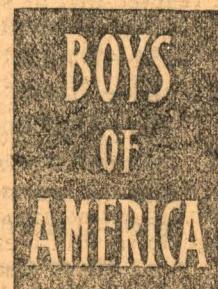
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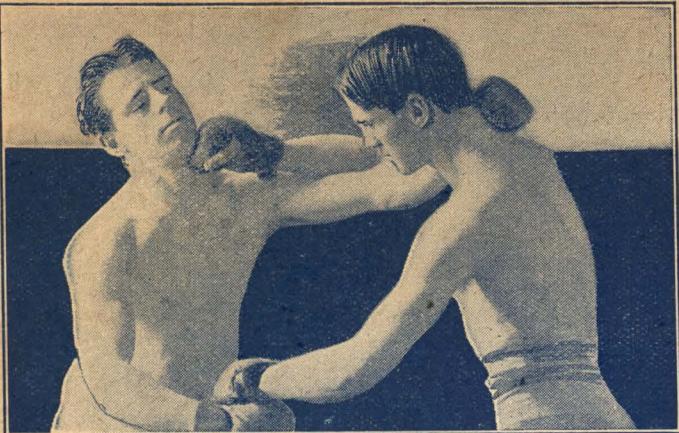
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